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Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4709th meeting

Tuesday, 18 February 2003, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Pleuger	(Germany)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Tidjani
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De la Sablière
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Letter dated 6 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/153).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-24986 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Letter dated 6 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/153)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, the Gambia, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, the Marshall Islands, Morocco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Peru, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Nesho (Albania), Mr. Baali (Algeria), Mr. Listre (Argentina), Mr. Dauth (Australia), Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain), Mr. Ivanov (Belarus), Mr. De Moura (Brazil), Mr. Heinbecker (Canada), Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica), Mr. Rodriguez Parilla (Cuba), Mr. Yépez Lasso (Ecuador), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Yauvoli (Fiji), Mr. Grey-Johnson (Gambia), Mr. Adamia (Georgia), Mr. Vassilakis (Greece), Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras), Mr. Kristjansson (Iceland), Mr. Nambiar (India), Mr. Djumala (Indonesia), Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Haraguchi (Japan), Mr. Al-Hussein (Jordan), Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait), Mr. Jegermanis (Latvia), Mr. Diab (Lebanon), Mr. Own (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein), Mr. Zainuddin (Malaysia), Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands), Mr. Loulichki (Morocco), Mr. Mackay (New Zealand), Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua), Mrs. Yahaya (Nigeria), Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman), Mr. De Rivero (Peru), Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar), Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea), Mr. Huntley (Saint Lucia), Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Tan (Singapore), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Mr. Mahendran (Sri Lanka), Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Mr. Stachelin (Switzerland), Mr. Kasemsarn (Thailand), Mr. Kerim (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Mr. Pamir (Turkey), Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates), Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay), Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Mr. Ngo Duc Thang (Viet Nam) and Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, which reads as follows:

> "In accordance with article 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, I have the honour to request the participation of His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, in the discussion of the agenda item under consideration by the Council on Iraq, which will start on 18 February 2003."

That letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2003/184.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Yahya Mahmassani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the request contained in the letter dated 6 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa addressed to the President of the Security Council, which was issued as document S/2003/153.

I should also like to draw the attention of members to document S/2003/183, containing the text of a letter dated 14 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I wish to recall that at our meeting last Friday, 14 February, ministers were given seven minutes for their statements. In view of the long list of speakers before us, I would appeal to all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five to seven minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing, and to deliver the condensed versions in this room. There are 61 speakers on my list. If they speak for seven minutes each, that means seven hours of debate, not including all the procedural time we need.

As another measure to optimize the use of our time in order to allow as many delegations as possible to take the floor, I will not individually invite speakers to take seats at the Council table. When a speaker is taking the floor, the Conference Officer will seat the next speaker on the list at the table.

I propose that we suspend our meeting tonight at 6.30 p.m. and resume tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. sharp, because otherwise we will not be able to finish our discussion. I would be very grateful if all members of the Council and those speaking in the Council Chamber would cooperate in this for the sake of expediency in the organization of our meeting.

I would like to welcome the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, at this meeting.

The first speaker on my list is the representative of South Africa, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I should like to congratulate Germany on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. We would also like to thank Security Council members for having scheduled this open debate. Above all, we wish to commend the Security Council for its continued transparency in addressing the situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

Before I begin my statement, I would like, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, to express our condolences to the people of South Korea and the people of the United States with regard to the tragedies that recently befell them.

We, the 115 States Members and 15 observer States of the United Nations that belong to the Non-Aligned Movement, called for this meeting because we believe that the Security Council is engaged in a crucial debate which has important repercussions for the entire international community.

The Non-Aligned Movement has always understood resolution 1441 (2002) to be about achieving verifiable disarmament in Iraq through inspections that would avoid leading us into a situation of war. From the outset, we understood that the inspections were designed as a necessary intrusive instrument to ensure the elimination of proscribed Iraqi programmes. To us, resolution 1441 (2002) was, and still is, about ensuring that Iraq is peacefully disarmed.

Through the adoption of that resolution, the Security Council unanimously decided to establish an enhanced inspection regime with the aim of bringing the disarmament process to full and verified completion. The stated purpose was, in the words of resolution 1441 (2002), "to afford Iraq ... a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under relevant resolutions of the Council" (*para. 2*).

The Non-Aligned Movement fully supports the intentions of resolution 1441 (2002). Even before the resolution was adopted, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Non-Aligned Movement called on Iraq to abide by all relevant Security Council resolutions. At that time, the Ministers stated:

> "We wish to encourage Iraq and the United Nations to intensify their efforts in search of a lasting, just and comprehensive solution to all outstanding issues between them in accordance

with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions."

The Non-Aligned Movement has noted the offer by several States to strengthen the inspection process. We believe this is in line with resolution 1441 (2002), which, in paragraph 2, mandates "an enhanced inspection regime with the aim of bringing to full and verified completion the disarmament process". The resolution also requests all Member States to give full support to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the discharge of their mandates. In that regard, we are pleased that Iraq has accepted an offer from South Africa of experts who led our country's programme to destroy our nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and the missiles for the delivery of those weapons. I am also pleased to announce that that team is on its way to Iraq as we speak.

On 14 February 2003, both Mr. Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the IAEA, told the Council that they detected increased and substantive cooperation by the Government of Iraq. They testified that access to inspection sites was prompt and without prior knowledge of the sites that the inspectors visited. Mr. Blix stated that UNMOVIC has so far not found any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. More than 200 chemical, and over 100 biological, samples have been collected at different sites, and the results to date have been consistent with Iraq's declaration. He made the important point that many materials related to Iraq's previous weapons programme remain unaccounted for but that one must not jump to the conclusion that proscribed weapons exist. We call on Iraq to cooperate fully and answer all questions raised by Mr. Blix. We welcome the cooperation Iraq has already given to the inspectors, and we hope that it will continue.

Mr. ElBaradei reported to the Council that since the IAEA had already neutralized Iraq's nuclear weapons programme by December 1998, the focus of its current activities has been on verifying whether Iraq revived its nuclear programme in the intervening years. He informed the Security Council that "We have to date found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in Iraq." (*S/PV.4707, p. 9*) However, the IAEA's investigations are continuing.

The message that has emanated from the 14 February debate in the Security Council is that the inspection process in Iraq is working and that Iraq is showing clear signs of cooperating more proactively with the inspectors. Significantly, the inspectors have also had the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the information that has been provided by several countries. There are still countries that claim to have information on Iraq that could be helpful to the inspectors, and we would urge the Security Council to encourage such countries to share that information with the inspectors as soon as possible. None of the information provided thus far would seem to justify the Council abandoning the inspection process and immediately resorting to the threatened "serious consequences".

The Security Council has yet to fully utilize the inspection mechanisms of resolution 1441 (2002) that would make for more robust and intrusive inspections. As a result, the Council has recently received several offers from Member States that have included the deployment of additional inspectors, surveillance aircraft and mobile customs teams to check for prohibited goods entering Iraq. We would urge the Council to fully explore all those practical options, which may assist in enhancing the success of the inspection process.

Although questions have been raised about how long the inspections should be allowed to continue in Iraq, we recall that there are no time limitations stipulated for inspections in resolution 1441 (2002). As Mr. Blix stated on 14 February, UNMOVIC has been on the ground in Iraq for only 11 weeks, during which the inspectors have been at full operational strength for only two weeks. Mr. Blix stated that the time frame would depend on which task one has in mind: the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and related items and programmes, disarmament, or monitoring to verify that no new proscribed activities occur. Mr. Blix pointed out that monitoring was essential and that it would remain an open-ended and ongoing process until the Council decides otherwise.

We believe that the Security Council must redouble its efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to the situation in Iraq, in line with international law and the provisions of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations is the most authoritative voice in a world of complex multilateralism and interdependence. It is an Organization founded on the need to preserve

international peace and security. We should not allow its legitimacy and credibility to be undermined by this issue.

When the Security Council passes resolutions, those resolutions are binding on all Member States. Security Council resolutions must be enforced without exception. We would hope that a Member State attempting to abide by Security Council resolutions would be encouraged to do so. We believe that resorting to war without fully exhausting all other options represents an admission of failure by the Security Council in carrying out its mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for his kind words addressed to me.

I would like to remind members of the Council and speakers to kindly adhere to the seven minutes allotted. Every additional minute or two adds up to another hour of debate in the Council. In order to give speakers the full use of their seven minutes, I would propose that we consider that the Ambassador of South Africa spoke on everyone's behalf in addressing kind words to me. I would therefore suggest that all other speakers refrain from addressing kind words to me. Other kind words are fully welcome.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express my thanks to you, Mr. President, and to the members of the Security Council for acceding to the request made by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement to convene this open meeting. I also have the pleasure of conveying my gratitude to the delegation of South Africa for having requested the convening of this meeting to hear the views of the Member States of the United Nations as a whole, and of the members of the Movement in particular, within the framework of increased transparency and ideas and views that may contribute to managing and peaceably resolving the current crisis.

The United States of America and Britain are continuing their feverish efforts to launch an aggressive war against my country, which has been the subject of an unjust comprehensive embargo for over 12 years. Their aim is to change the national Government of Iraq and to impose American hegemony over the region and its resources, as a first step towards world domination through the use of force. This is a dangerous precedent in international relations that threatens the credibility of the United Nations and exposes international and regional peace and security to grave dangers.

Iraq's record of compliance with Security Council resolutions is unprecedented in this international Organization and in the history of international relations. During 1991 and 1992, Iraq, along with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), destroyed all the sites, facilities and materials related to its previous programmes of weapons of mass destruction. From 1992 to 1998, Iraq cooperated with UNSCOM and the IAEA to ascertain that Iraq was free of any proscribed programmes. Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, the former Chairman of UNSCOM, stated on 13 January 1993 that Iraq had met 95 per cent of its disarmament obligations. He also repeated that statement in an interview with Swedish radio on 7 September 2002.

When the Security Council decided to conduct a comprehensive review of Iraq's compliance with Council resolutions in order to lift the embargo imposed on it after the Secretary-General's visit to Iraq in 1998, the United States ordered Richard Butler, the former Executive Chairman of UNSCOM, to withdraw the inspectors in preparation for its aggression in December 1998, dubbed "Operation Desert Fox". During that operation, Iraq was bombed by hundreds of missiles that killed thousands of Iraqis, and Iraq's infrastructure was destroyed, having been rebuilt after 1991.

The whole world condemned that act of aggression. The United Nations Secretary-General considered it to be a dark day in United Nations history. I would like to point out here that the United States Government confirmed then, in 1998, that Operation Desert Fox had destroyed all the weapons of mass destruction that Iraq possessed. After the aggression, the Security Council formed a panel headed by Ambassador Amorim. The panel recommended that the remaining disarmament questions could be dealt with in the reinforced ongoing monitoring and verification. Ambassador Amorim based his recommendations on the former UNSCOM report of 1997, which stated that there no longer remained much more unknown about Iraq's remaining military capabilities.

Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) adopted the recommendations of the Amorim panel. Paragraph 2 of the resolution entrusted the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) with the establishment and operation of a reinforced monitoring system that would resolve the remaining disarmament issues. In its planning and organizational structure, UNMOVIC has taken into account the concept of integrating disarmament issues with ongoing monitoring, as described in paragraph 13 of document S/2000/292.

In November of last year, Iraq agreed to the return of the inspectors. The Secretary-General conveyed Iraq's agreement in a letter to the Security Council. The letter included two basic issues. The first considered the return of inspectors as a step towards a comprehensive review of the issue of Iraq, with a view to lifting the embargo imposed on it. The second dealt with the necessity of respecting Iraq's sovereignty and independence. From what we see today, these two issues are still awaiting implementation by the Security Council.

During its three rounds of talks with the Secretary-General last year, Iraq requested that no threats be made to its sovereignty and security. It also requested the initiation of technical talks with Mr. Blix in order to agree on a mechanism to identify the most important remaining issues and ways of solving them. At that time, Mr. Blix said that identifying remaining issues would be decided by the Security Council after the submission of a work programme to the Council two months after the start of work in Iraq. After Iraq agreed to the return of the inspectors and its subsequent agreement to resolution 1441 (2002), Iraq again put the matter before Mr. Blix. However, he repeated that the inspections would have to start first, for two months, and then a work programme would be prepared, followed by consultation with Iraq on the remaining issues.

The United States has exploited this ambiguity to transform the issue from a technical and scientific one into a political one. It requested Iraq to prove that it is free of the alleged weapons of mass destruction, although what was originally requested was active cooperation with the inspectors.

Nevertheless, Iraq has provided all sorts of active and full cooperation, as follows. First, in record time, Iraq submitted a full and comprehensive declaration of its previous programmes of weapons of mass destruction, in addition to submitting new documents covering the period from 1998 to 2002. Secondly, inspectors were granted immediate and unconditional access to all sites they wished to visit, without exempting private homes or the presidential sites, which are a symbol of Iraq's sovereignty. Inspection teams have conducted over 700 inspections to date, covering 400 sites. The cooperation was not limited to opening the doors; it also extended to answering all the questions posed by the inspectors by providing the requested documents, plans and explanations.

Thirdly, Iraq established two specialized commissions to search for documents or materials related to previous proscribed programmes in order to expedite the work of the inspectors. Fourthly, Iraq has allowed inspectors to use helicopters and aerial surveillance in their work, including U-2, Mirage and Antonov planes. The U-2 planes have started their work in the last two days.

Fifthly, Iraq's cooperation is demonstrated by facilitating interviews with scientists and persons the inspectors may wish to see. Those persons were encouraged to accept private interviews with the inspectors, and this is precisely what is taking place now. Sixthly, new methods were suggested to dispel any doubts regarding remaining disarmament issues. Any suggestions submitted by UNMOVIC to solve these issues are welcome. It is only natural that the proposals made by countries will also be equally welcome.

Seventh, Iraq provided inspectors with logistical support to overcome any obstacles that they may encounter in their inspections, and this includes the opening of regional offices for the inspectors throughout Iraq, thus facilitating their use of technical and scientific means for the immediate and effective completion of their task.

We would like to reiterate here — in particular with regard to the controversy surrounding the issue of VX and anthrax, which were unilaterally destroyed by Iraq — that Iraq submitted practical suggestions during the recent technical talks with Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei in Baghdad on 8 and 9 February, with the objective of clearing up what the former Special Commission saw as remaining issues and vague points. This can be done through measuring the dissolved quantities of VX and anthrax in the unilateral

destruction sites, using chemical and physiological analyses. Iraq submitted documents proving the validity of this process, as well as the results it has reached in conducting searches regarding other issues.

This active cooperation resulted in refuting all the allegations emanating from the United States and the United Kingdom. Those allegations started with the statement delivered by the United States President at the General Assembly. This was followed by reports issued by the United States and the United Kingdom Administrations, the last case being the presentation by Mr. Powell before the Security Council on 5 February.

Reason and wisdom make it incumbent upon us to ask if there is any justification for the United States and the United Kingdom to launch war against Iraq under the pretext of their concern about Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction. Even at a time when Iraq is under an ongoing monitoring and verification system, is it to be rewarded with yet another attack by the United States, which is threatening to use weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons?

Through its journey of compliance with the international Organization's resolutions over the last 12 years, Iraq has paid a dear price and has made sacrifices. It has lost close to two million of its people. It is now facing another threat of destruction and killing. Therefore, from this rostrum, we call upon all Member States to shoulder their responsibilities, in particular the member States of the Security Council, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, which emphasizes peaceful solution. We call upon them to put an end to the unjust embargo imposed on Iraq and to eliminate the no-fly zones unilaterally imposed by the United States and the United Kingdom.

We call upon all countries in the world to heed the call of millions of people the world over, who during the last few days rejected the idea of any aggression or threat of war or war against Iraq. These millions of people condemned the troops amassed as a military threat to Iraq and the region and alerted the world community to the dangers of military aggression against Iraq, its people and its territorial integrity. We warn against the serious consequences of a war in a region that has suffered the agony of many wars, a region that is still suffering from the continuation of the policy of occupation and destruction by Israel against the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights. We also demand respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political choice expressed by the Iraqi people during the general popular referendum to reaffirm Iraq's political leader and leadership.

The launching of an attack by the United States and the United Kingdom against Iraq would be proof of the failure of the entire international system. That system must rely on the Charter of the United Nations as its indispensable point of reference for the maintenance of international peace and security. Such an attack would undermine the credibility of the Security Council.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm Iraq's commitment to continuing full and active cooperation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. In that regard, the two organizations have responded well in implementing Security Council resolutions in a professional and honest manner, in accordance with the Charter and unaffected by political influence and pressure from the United States and the United Kingdom.

We would like to reiterate to the world community that if an aggression against Iraq takes place, Iraq's people, famous for their struggle against the British occupation in the 1920s, will defend their country and will allow no encroachment upon Iraq's sovereignty and independence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that with your expertise and skill you will be able to lead the Council's work successfully at this critical juncture. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Permanent Representative of France, Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, for the valuable efforts he and his delegation made while presiding over the Council last month.

In October of last year, the Security Council held an open meeting to discuss developments in the crisis between Iraq and the United Nations in response to a request by the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. Many members participated, and the views of those members crystallized international opinion, helping the Council to reach agreement, which culminated in the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). The resolution was a

major achievement, through which the Security Council showed its determination to shoulder the responsibility entrusted to it under Article 24 of the Charter: the maintenance of international peace and security. Today's meeting comes in response to a similar request. However, it is being held in more difficult circumstances, due to the Iraqi Government's reluctance to fulfil its commitments under Security Council resolutions 687 (1991), 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002).

It is regrettable that Iraq has continued to defy the will of the international community for so long, not realizing the gravity of its policies and their repercussions for the peace and stability of the entire Gulf region. For more than 20 years, the region has suffered the negative effects of the Iraqi Government's actions and its failure to respond to the resolutions of international legality. After the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002) in November, everyone was optimistic that the beating of the drums of war would be stopped and that the Iraqi Government would come to its senses, realize the gravity of the situation, seize the final opportunity offered by that resolution and cooperate fully with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by declaring its activities in the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction and by giving an account of all its proscribed weapons. However, that optimism soon evaporated and was supplanted by concern when Iraq submitted its full, final and complete declaration on 7 December last year. UNMOVIC and the IAEA stated that the declaration was incomplete and contained no important new information. The periodic reports submitted to the Security Council by the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC and the Director General of IAEA, the last of which was delivered last Friday, have concluded that Iraq has not fully cooperated in responding to the requirements of resolution 1441 (2002). That is truly regrettable, especially since such an attitude undermines the chances of peace and increases the possibility of war, which we are all trying to avoid because it would have negative repercussions on the region and its peoples. Kuwait, because of its geographic location, could be more heavily impacted than other countries by developments in Iraq's relations with the United Nations. As part of our contingency planning, Kuwait has recently taken precautionary measures to ensure peace and security for its people.

On many occasions, Kuwait has expressed its views, which are as follows. First, Iraq must fully commit to the complete and faithful implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, Kuwait supports all efforts made to reach a peaceful solution to the question of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with resolutions of international legality. We urge the Iraqi Government to respond fully to regional and international appeals and resolutions calling on Iraq to comply with their provisions in order to avoid war.

Thirdly, Kuwait pays tribute to the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors for their impartiality, professionalism and objectivity. It appreciates the great efforts that all are making to fulfil UNMOVIC's mandate.

Fourthly, Kuwait hopes that the use of military force will be a last resort and will take place under international legality. We believe that the Iraqi Government alone can spare the brotherly Iraqi people and the other peoples of the region the negative repercussions and dangers of military action by modifying its conduct as soon as possible and by cooperating with the inspectors on substance rather than merely on process.

Fifthly, we reaffirm the need to maintain the unity of the Security Council because that is an important element in ensuring commitment to the resolutions adopted by the Council. Previous Council experience in the handling of the question of Iraq has proven that a common stance and unified will are more effective in realizing our desired objectives.

The Security Council has been intensively and repeatedly seized of the question of the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The issue is very important because it affects international peace and security. However, it is not the only commitment included in relevant Security Council resolutions. The resolutions contain other important commitments directly affecting Kuwait that have not yet been settled. The most important of these issues are missing persons and prisoners of Kuwaiti and other nationalities, and that of Kuwaiti property seized during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. It is regrettable that the methods employed by the Iraqi Government with respect to the inspection teams tasked with the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction since 1991 are the same methods Iraq uses in addressing the situation of

prisoners, missing persons and Kuwaiti property, despite that issue's humanitarian aspect. This proves that Iraq's procrastination and evasion of commitments are an entrenched approach for the Iraqi authorities.

With respect to the Kuwaiti and other prisoners and missing persons, no progress has been made in resolving this humanitarian question. Those people have been missing for more than 12 years. Iraq sometimes boycotts the work of the Tripartite Commission and the Technical Subcommittee chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and sometimes it resumes its participation with one or the other body for purely political reasons. For more than three years, Iraq refused to cooperate with the High-Level Coordinator, Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov, appointed by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1284 (1999). Iraq recently agreed to invite the High-Level Coordinator to Iraq. That visit took place in January. However, no tangible progress was made.

Cooperation on procedure is the main characteristic of how Iraq has handled the humanitarian situation for all these years in total violation of Security Council resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and 1284 (1999). Therefore, we hope that the Security Council will continue to pressure the Iraqi Government to meet the demands of the resolutions of international legality. We are not content with presidential statements intended purely for the press.

As concerns the issue of the property usurped by Iraq during its occupation of Kuwait, the way that Iraq has addressed this question is not different from the way in which it has dealt with other issues. Procedural and nominal cooperation is the main characteristic of Iraqi conduct. Iraq claimed that it did not have any Kuwaiti property, and documented those claims in a letter it addressed to the Secretary-General in 1994. Later, however, it admitted that it still had some Kuwaiti governmental and institutional documents and property. Iraq even claimed that these documents represented the notional archives of Kuwait. Then, when those documents were returned, under the auspices of the United Nations and in the presence of the League of Arab States, and when we studied them to determine which properties had been returned, we found that these were simply correspondence between different organs of the State apparatus and that they could not be the official archives of Kuwait.

We therefore sent a letter to the Secretary-General in order to place on record our position. That document was issued under the symbol S/2002/1412 on 24 December 2002. Iraq's failure to cooperate in returning the national archives of Kuwait and other property is a cause for concern. The letter from the Iraqi President addressed to the Kuwaiti people on 7 December of last year confirmed our doubts and the fact that Iraq does not intend to respect its Arab and international commitments or the sovereignty and independence of Kuwait.

Kuwait submitted a letter to the Council with information on the subject, contained in document S/2002/1350, dated 11 December 2002.

In conclusion, the Security Council, as the principal organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, is facing a grave challenge: to bring about the implementation of its many resolutions with regard to the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. The Council has the responsibility of preserving its authority, credibility and legitimacy before the international community. We hope that the Council will present a unified will and take the same position that it has in the context of previous international crises, in a manner that enhances the role of the United Nations and promotes the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Morocco, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) *(spoke in Arabic)*: First of all, on behalf of my delegation, I should like to thank the delegation of South Africa for the initiative, taken on behalf of the non-aligned States, to hold this public meeting on the question of Iraq.

In accordance with your recommendation, Sir, I shall limit myself to associating myself with the gratitude expressed and the compliments paid by Ambassador Kumalo to your predecessor, Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière.

We followed with interest the presentation of the reports by Mr. Hans Blix, the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We have taken due note of the progress that has been achieved in the inspections. Together with the members of the Security Council, we have taken note

also of the measures undertaken by the Iraqi authorities to implement the provisions of resolution 1441 (2002). Mr. Blix's statement contained encouraging indications regarding the desired results through the continued work of the inspectors in a serious manner and in a favourable climate.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which desires to see peace prevail in the region and this crisis overcome by peaceful means in order to avert more tragedies in the region, believes that the progress achieved is encouraging. The Kingdom of Morocco urges Iraq to demonstrate continued constructive cooperation with the United Nations inspectors in implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).

To achieve the desired goal, efforts must continue. A favourable climate must prevail and sufficient and necessary means must be provided to facilitate the work of the inspectors and enable them to discharge their duties with the greatest possible efficiency.

The Middle East region cannot tolerate fresh agonies or the ravages of a new war. Indeed, it badly needs to see hotbeds of tension extinguished and peace and security reign throughout the region.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which has always made the settlement of disputes through peaceful means a basic principle underlying its regional and international relations, sincerely hopes that this meeting will result in the elaboration of an approach that will spare the brotherly Iraq people suffering and the ravages of war and preserve its national unity and territorial integrity within the framework of international legality.

All of this will serve to strengthen the credibility of the Security Council as the organ entrusted with the maintenance of collective security and will allow it to achieve the lofty and ultimate objective for which the United Nations was created: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Cuba, on whom I now call.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The impressive anti-war demonstrations that took place all around the world on Saturday, 15 February; the opinion polls; the productive and substantial ministerial debate held on 14 February in the Council; the prudence and objectivity of the presentations given by the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); and the almost unanimous support for the courageous, measured and constructive statement of the French Foreign Minister, all of these express a powerful consensus: peace must be preserved as the ideal and the very reason for the existence of the United Nations and in order to ensure that it can exercise its inalienable and exclusive rights and duties under the Charter.

A blue canvas over Picasso's "Guernica" cannot disguise the fact that it is a warning to the Security Council — a warning that cannot be ignored — concerning the exceptional nature of the prerogative of the use of force, exercised on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations and for which history will demand accountability. Nor does it diminish our memory of the horrors that gave rise to the United Nations.

Only 72 hours ago, President Fidel Castro stated:

> "These are not days of hope and glory for peace in the world. A war is on the verge of breaking out. This would not be a confrontation between comparable forces. On the one side would be a hegemonistic super-Power, with all of its overwhelming military might and technology, backed by a main ally, another country with nuclear capability and a member of the United Nations Security Council. On the other side would be a country whose people have suffered more than 10 years of daily bombings and the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, mainly those of children, through hunger and disease, following an unequal war provoked by Iraq's illegal occupation of Kuwait, which was an independent State recognized by the international community. The vast majority of world public opinion is unanimously opposed to a new war. Above all, it does not accept the adoption of a unilateral decision by the United States Government, in complete disregard for international rules and for the power and authority of the United Nations, limited as they already are. This is an unnecessary war, on pretexts that are neither credible nor proven.

> "Completely debilitated by the last war against the United States in 1991, Iraq ... utterly lacks the capacity to counteract the offensive and defensive weaponry at the disposal of the United States, which is fully capable of annihilating any threat."

We have the absolute conviction that there is not the slightest risk for that country or for its friends in the region, and that it would be an unnecessary war.

The consequences of an unnecessary and unjustified military action in Iraq would be extremely grave. As has been foreseen, the humanitarian catastrophe could be massive and terrible. The deaths and destruction would be unpredictable. No one could calculate its duration. The economic and political effects on a world in recession would be enormous, especially in developing countries, which are already paying unsustainable increases in oil prices that are disastrous for their economies and that, with the launching of the first missile, would rise to even more exorbitant levels.

Unquestionably, Iraq has cooperated with the inspectors and has confirmed its resolve to complete its compliance with all relevant Security Council resolutions, in order to eliminate any doubt with respect to the possibility that it still possesses weapons of mass destruction. Recently, it accepted additional inspection components and adopted new legislative and executive measures; this has been favourably received by the international community, with the sole exception of those who appear to have made up their minds in advance to carry out military action at any cost and with economic objectives based on control of energy resources and on domestic policy concerns.

The resolutions must be implemented in good faith by all parties in order to move forward towards a comprehensive solution to the question of Iraq that guarantees peace and stability in the region and includes the lifting of the sanctions regime, which is causing so much suffering for the Iraqi people. The sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Iraq, of Kuwait and of all the other countries in the region must be respected. The Non-Aligned Movement Summit Countries will surely make a decisive contribution to peace.

Cuba defends international law, because we consider it to be the only viable guarantee of international peace and security. We believe that the world should be regulated by a system of collective security, based on cooperation, that provides guarantees for all. Such a system cannot be replaced by "the law of the jungle" for the benefit of the powerful and, ultimately, of the only super-Power. The unipolar, unsustainable, unjust and profoundly inequitable international order cannot be succeeded by an even more primitive, unstable, unpredictable and dangerous one.

The new doctrine of pre-emptive attack that some seek to impose advocates the right to use or threaten to use force in international relations and the right to take unilateral military action against other States, in advance and in the face of indeterminate and vague threats. That is a flagrant violation of the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations and seeks to turn the inherent right of legitimate self-defence into a blank check.

It is very dangerous to attempt to resolve national security concerns through unilateral action or unfounded accusations rather than through cooperation among States parties to treaties and through the use of the procedures defined in them for that purpose.

Cuba, which for four decades has been a victim of the nuclear super-Power's aggression and hostility and which has never developed, and has the firm resolve never to develop, weapons of mass destruction — whether nuclear or of any other kind — reaffirms that general and complete disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, is the only possible path to peace. We reaffirm that the use of such weapons under any circumstances, the further development of such arsenals, their proliferation or the attempt to secure such capabilities would be madness, with unpredictable consequences.

Apparently, the United States is now promoting a draft resolution in the Security Council designed to make a war against Iraq inevitable. It would follow up on elements of resolution 1441 (2002) related to the supposed ceasefire of 1991 — the concepts of "material breach" and "serious consequences" — which, as we warned at the time, were intended to support the interpretation of the hawks that the resolution authorizes the use of force in the event of alleged Iraqi non-compliance. The facts have increasingly confirmed the rightness of our warnings.

Despite the building of opposition to war around the world and within the United States and the United Kingdom, the risk of unilateral attack is growing. Cuba strongly hopes that, among the members of the Security Council, adherence to their countries' legitimate national interests and to fundamentally democratic respect for the will of their peoples will prevail.

The Security Council, so often held hostage to the anti-democratic and arbitrary exercise of the veto, now has an opportunity to restore, to a degree, its diminished credibility by building a solid and insurmountable majority in defence of peace. In that event, it would act with broad international backing and with the support of public opinion. Moreover, the United Nations could rely on the enormous political, moral and legal force of the General Assembly.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should like to join previous speakers in briefly expressing our felicitations to you, Mr. President, and to your French predecessor, as well as our appreciation to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei.

My country, as one of Iraq's neighbours, is following attentively the situation concerning Iraq and its disarmament obligations under Security Council resolutions. On the one hand, we directly experienced the horror of becoming the victim of all-out aggression and of the massive use of chemical weapons in the 1980s. Today, 15 years after the end of the war, the wounds are yet to be healed. Tens of thousands of the chemically wounded civilians and soldiers who survived the horror continue to live agonizing and excruciating lives, and hardly a week goes by without one or several of them dying as a result. Therefore, we have an unparalleled interest in ensuring that there will never again be an aggression in our neighbourhood and that weapons of mass destruction will never again be used there.

On the other hand, the prospect of another destabilizing war in our immediate vicinity is a nightmarish scenario of death and destruction. The Iranian people and Government are concerned first and foremost about the humanitarian catastrophe that would undoubtedly befall the Iraqi people in the event of a war — let alone the influx of displaced persons and refugees.

The extent of destabilization in the region and of uncertainty in Iraq in the event of a war might go far beyond anything we can imagine today. Given the state of Iraqi society and of the whole region, there are many wild cards that no one can fit into his calculations with any degree of certainty. But one outcome is almost certain: extremism stands to benefit enormously from an ill-calculated adventure in Iraq. The prospect of appointing a foreign military commander to run an Islamic and Arab country is all the more destabilizing and only indicates prevailing delusions.

Bearing all that in mind, every effort should be made to fulfil the international community's unanimous demand for the disarmament of Iraq without recourse to armed force. Under the current circumstances, and with a devastating war in the offing, it is all the more incumbent upon the Iraqi leadership to cooperate fully and proactively with the weapons inspectors, especially on substance, as the inspectors have repeatedly called for. Iraq's other obligations — including that it release prisoners of war and cease harbouring terrorists on its soil — have yet to be fully carried out.

Likewise, we do not see any reason for the rush-to-war rhetoric. We agree that resolution 1441 (2002) is about disarmament and not about inspections. But we believe that, while the chief inspectors are signalling their intention to continue to work, there is no ground for aborting the process and embarking on military action, with all its known and unknown devastating consequences. We further believe that the strengthening of the inspection regime by providing it with additional inspectors and equipment cannot be readily discarded by a rush to war. We therefore express our full support for the efforts of members of this Council and the proposal of France to strengthen the inspection system.

We are increasingly hearing that the United Nations should show backbone and courage or become an irrelevant talking society. While we fully agree with the need for the effectiveness of the United Nations as the sole universal Organization, we cannot accept that the priorities of one Power should provide the criteria for the effectiveness or relevance of the United Nations. We need not recall that dozens of Security Council resolutions explicitly demanding an end to Israeli occupation of Arab lands have been dead letter

not for weeks or years, but for decades; nor do we need to name the only major Power that has enabled Israel to contemptuously flout the will of the international community.

The same dubious track record applies to weapons of mass destruction. The international regime governing the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction has enormously suffered from the application of self-serving and arbitrary criteria, condoning and even encouraging friends of the day on the path of acquiring such weapons. The provision of chemical precursors and biological agents to Iraq in the 1980s, which is widely documented and lies at the origin of the current crisis, is a brazen example in this respect. Condoning Israel's nuclear arsenal and precluding the realization of the repeated demands of the General Assembly and even of this Council to establish a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is another illustrative case.

Against this backdrop, it is difficult to accept such arguments about the effectiveness of the United Nations or the repeated claims to moral clarity.

We believe that what is at stake today goes far beyond the mere disarmament of Iraq. The rush-to-war rhetoric is not coming out of a vacuum; neither is the anxiety expressed by the international community hyperbole. We are approaching the peak of a trend, which includes pre-emptive strikes and the use of tactical nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States.

What we witnessed last Friday here in this Chamber and, more importantly, what followed the day after across the globe were clear expressions of concern and alarm over a trend which, willingly or otherwise, is undermining not only the international consensus to eradicate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, but in fact the very institution and norms that have been instrumental in forging that consensus and in maintaining international peace and security in general.

In closing, let me stress that the current and historically non-permanent power imbalance and patterns of friendship should not induce anybody to indulge themselves in undermining the credibility and authority of the Security Council. It is imperative that the Security Council, as the legally competent forum entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, remain the centre of decision-making on how to deal with the Iraqi issue, and all members of the international community should genuinely abide by its decision.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Algeria, on whom I now call.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset, Sir, very briefly to congratulate you and your predecessor, Ambassador Jean-Marc De La Sablière. I also wish to thank you for having granted the request of the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement to convene this open debate on an issue that has continued to be central to the concerns of the entire membership of the international community ever since the debate we held in October 2002.

Like the rest of the international community, Algeria has followed with keen concern the events that have taken place since then and therefore cannot fail to be anxious regarding the serious dangers now threatening regional and international peace and security.

It is nevertheless appropriate to stress here that, since Iraq's acceptance on 16 September of the unconditional return to its territory of the United Nations inspectors, followed in November by its unconditional acceptance of resolution 1441 (2002), never in more than a decade have there been conditions so conducive to a political and diplomatic settlement of what is called the Iraqi crisis or have the prospects for a peaceful disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction been so near at hand.

We owe these positive developments, in contrast to the period of defiance that characterized the relationship between Iraq and the United Nations, in particular over the past four years, first and foremost to the determination of the international community to see its decisions implemented and to the outstanding unity demonstrated by the Security Council, which is the international community's embodiment, during the process that concluded on 8 November 2002 with the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 (2002).

However, it is equally correct to say that we owe these positive developments to Iraq, which, in demonstrating realism, wisdom and responsibility in its relationship with the United Nations, has been able to work in sync with the peaceful aspirations of the international community and, in particular, with the efforts to that end made by the Secretary-General and

by the leaders of the countries members of the League of Arab States.

Ever since the resumption of inspections in Iraq on 26 November 2002, the international community has been able to measure progress achieved towards a peaceful settlement of the thorny issue of the disarmament of Iraq with respect to weapons of mass destruction. Resolution 1441 (2002), in creating a strengthened inspections regime, provided the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the means to carry out their missions. During each of the stages provided for in the adopted timetable, the effectiveness of the established system has proved itself.

The interim reports made to the Security Council by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei on 27 January 2003 clearly highlighted the cooperation of the Iraqi authorities with regard to the freedom of movement and action of the inspection teams, which, it should be recalled, is one of the strongest demands laid down in resolution 1441 (2002). Those reports also had the merit of placing these facts once again into context by establishing that the disarmament of Iraq with respect to weapons of mass destruction had been achieved to a substantive, indeed decisive degree under the old inspections regime established under earlier Council resolutions that form an integral part of resolution 1441 (2002).

The period between 1998 and 2002, when the inspections were interrupted, was clearly of a nature to give rise to questions as to the fate of the stocks of weapons of mass destruction that were not destroyed or to the potential resumption of the production of prohibited weapons. The heads of the inspections teams, however, objectively and solemnly raised these legitimate issues on 27 January.

We believe that it is vital, however, to ensure that the dynamic set in motion by the resumption of inspections should contribute daily to a shrinking of the remaining grey areas regarding the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and to bringing us closer to a comprehensive implementation of resolution 1441 (2002), which is the surest way to stave off the prospect of the use of force.

Thus, Member States have been able to take advantage of the resources provided by resolution 1441 (2002), paragraph 10 in particular, by providing UNMOVIC and IAEA, in addition to sophisticated material means, with a significant amount of the information available to them, such as in the presentation made to the Council by Mr. Colin Powell on 5 February, which highlighted the full importance and relevance of strengthening the inspections and the need for Iraq to cooperate fully and promptly with UNMOVIC and IAEA to achieve peaceful disarmament.

The momentum of the inspections has clearly been increased, as the presentation of the 14 February reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei before the Security Council attests. The reports emphasized significant progress and greater cooperation by Iraq with the United Nations on substantive issues, strengthened by the Iraq's adoption of legislation prohibiting the production of weapons of mass destruction, which shows that the country has committed itself to abide by international legality. That being the case, any proposal aimed at improving the effectiveness of the inspections and allowing the inspectors to discharge the duties entrusted to them must be a subject of attention from the Council.

Despite these positive events, the threat of armed conflict continues, unfortunately, to loom over the region and give rise to the gravest of fears regarding the extremely serious consequences that such a conflict would bring about in Iraq itself and in other countries of the region.

Algeria, for its part, notes with hope that since the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002) nothing has happened that is liable to justify the implementation of the paragraphs that open the way to the use of force. A military operation against Iraq would have a disastrous impact on the Iraqi people — who for 12 years have been subjected to sanctions, which are in many respects inhumane — and on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, to which the Security Council has reaffirmed its dedication in resolution 1441 (2002). It would also have serious consequences for the peace process in the Middle East, which is already moribund, as well as for the Israeli-Arab conflict as such.

From that point of view, the international community expects that the Security Council will maintain its authority and credibility, and that of the United Nations, by knowing first of all how to find the resources within the Organization that enable it to remain in control of the process of a peaceful and

political settlement of the Iraqi crisis, through unity of all its members. It can then work to strengthen the authority and credibility that has been undermined by Israeli intransigence by shouldering its responsibilities, all its responsibilities, towards the Palestinian people and by demonstrating equal determination and firmness regarding all of those who are trampling under foot its resolutions and by rejecting them.

It is extremely important here to emphasize that the decision taken by the international community to make the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, contained in paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), must not be limited to Iraq. It is equally applicable to Israel, which has arrogated to itself the right to be the sole nuclear power in the region in defiance of international legality.

The future of the system of collective security, carefully crafted, depends on equal treatment afforded all the members of the international community, which for us, nations large and small, constitutes the guarantee that the law will prevail in any and all circumstances.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for this month. I have full confidence in your ability to lead the Council successfully thanks to your experience and wisdom. We would also like to congratulate your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for so ably presiding over the Council last month. We would also like to thank the Council for convening this open meeting to express the concerns of Member States at the United Nations.

We are meeting today to discuss the situation of Iraq amidst difficult circumstances. We welcome the reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, which we heard on Friday. The reports included many positive points with regard to the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and stressed the importance of continuing the inspections, which will reduce the possibility of war and its ravages. We would like to thank Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their great efforts to bring to a close this complex case.

The Arab Summit in Beirut last March stressed the importance and necessity of safeguarding peace and stability in the Gulf region. It also stressed the importance of creating positive conditions conducive to the development of normal relations among the countries of the region. In this context, we stress the importance of Iraq's implementation of Security Council resolutions relevant to the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, particularly the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons from third countries, as well as its cooperation with the United Nations to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The United Nations expressed its grave concern over war and its negative impact and repercussions on Iraq, which would lead to untold suffering. We cannot, therefore, ignore the humanitarian aspect of the situation in Iraq. When all is said and done, those who will suffer are the Iraqis, who have been suffering, actually, for more than 10 years. We should work to alleviate their suffering and assist them in resolving this predicament. The Iraqi people have suffered the scourge of many wars during the last decade. International sanctions have exacerbated their suffering.

We should stress here that it is Israel, the party that owns a destructive and lethal nuclear arsenal, that should be held accountable by the international community. The international community has ignored the crimes perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people, thereby fuelling and increasing the cycle of violence in the region, all as a result of the policies pursued by the current Israeli Government, which continues to occupy Arab territories and to commit war crimes.

We therefore call for the enforcement of paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), which calls for the declaration of the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction. The international community must play the role entrusted to it by the Charter, without any selectivity or double standards.

We have been following the inspections operations in Iraq. It has become clear to us that the tasks undertaken by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have yielded positive results. What is required now is to allow the inspections more time to complete such tasks.

The Iraqi Government should cooperate more actively to bring this enduring case to a close. We believe that Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), unanimously adopted, provides for a framework that has not been fully used yet. As Members of this international Organization, which was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we should commit ourselves to the implementation of international law and the enhancement of human rights. We should also spare no effort to peacefully settle any crisis that we face, so that we can maintain the foundations of international peace and security.

Continued inspections in Iraq, with more time for the inspectors to implement their mandate, will assist in disarming Iraq, which is the objective that, collectively, we are seeking. The disarmament of Iraq by peaceful means is our objective. There is an alternative to war; military force should be a last resort. The Security Council, which is entrusted with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should spare no effort to use every means at its disposal peacefully to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. Iraq should cooperate more actively with the international community and should implement all relevant Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, we would welcome any initiatives or ideas calling for the peaceful resolution of this question and stressing the need to preserve the unity, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. We hope that the efforts of the Council and other international efforts will be successful in finding a solution to the current crisis.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Jordan, on whom I now call.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our Organization was established after the Second World War in an endeavour to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war through the maintenance of justice, respect for international law and the promotion of basic human rights. As such, the United Nations took it upon itself to maintain international peace and security through collective measures to remove the causes of war and threats to peace and to bring about, by peaceful means when possible, and in accordance with the principles of justice and international law, the settlement of international disputes that could lead to a breach of the peace.

Given the current situation, which threatens to exhaust peaceful means in dealing with the Iraqi issue, the Jordanian Government believes that all States Members of the United Nations should work together to achieve a solution through all available peaceful means, and to avoid any measures that would breach the peace and further exacerbate the situation in the Middle East.

That in itself makes it incumbent on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities under the Charter, in particular paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 24. The rest of the membership of the Organization has entrusted the Security Council with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and the Council must therefore use all possible reasonable means to resolve the Iraqi issue through negotiation and dialogue. In that connection, I would like to reiterate the position of the Jordanian Government that the implementation of Security Council resolutions — all resolutions on the Middle East, whether on Iraq or on the occupied Palestinian territories — is an obligation on all States without exception.

The Jordanian Government believes that a peaceful way out of the current crisis would require that Iraq fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, including those related to inspections, in particular resolutions 687 (1991), 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002). Resolution 687 (1991) created the framework for and set out the goals of the inspection process in Iraq; resolution 1284 (1999) clarified, inter alia, the obligations of both Iraq and the inspectors in relation to resolving the remaining disarmament issues and to the creation of a reinforced system of ongoing monitoring and verification; and resolution 1441 (2002) provided the inspectors with significant rights and the authority to build a robust, enhanced and effective inspection system. Such a system would put an end to Iraq's proscribed weapons programmes in a peaceful manner, provided that suitable conditions for the process existed. To date, this system has shown evidence of unprecedented effectiveness. It should continue and, if necessary, be enhanced, as its failure would constitute a threat to international peace and security. The Security Council would then have to convene to consider that failure, as well as how to restore international peace and security.

In this regard, the Government of Jordan would like to reiterate that the Security Council resolutions relevant to Iraq complement one another. It further expresses its support for the continuation of the inspection process and for the work being carried out by Mr. Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Government of Jordan also calls for improved cooperation on the part of all relevant parties, especially the Iraqi Government, to ensure that Iraq's proscribed weapons programmes are brought to an end in a peaceful manner. In this regard, it welcomes the outcome of the recent talks that took place in Baghdad, including unconditional permission for surveillance flights and the conducting of private interviews with Iraqi scientists, as well as a commitment by Iraq to enact, without conditions, legislation prohibiting the manufacture and stockpiling of proscribed weapons.

Jordan calls on the Iraqi Government not to waste this opportunity and to take the initiative by cooperating proactively in the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions. That would save Iraq, the region and its peoples from the scourge of war and from the suffering that would inevitably follow. The Government of Jordan hopes that that would be the right step towards a comprehensive solution encompassing the implementation of all relevant Council resolutions, including those related to Kuwaiti and third-party prisoners of war and missing persons. That in turn would lead to an end to the long-drawn-out suffering of the Iraqi people, allowing them to live in prosperity and dignity, and would ensure that future generations of Iraqis can live in peace and security.

The wars that plagued the Middle East region in the previous century were, and still are, the major cause of political, economic and social instability in that region. This in turn has had negative repercussions on international peace and security and has contributed to the creation of a major global economic crisis. Any new war would therefore have serious repercussions, not only on the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, but on the whole region. Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis that would inevitably result from such a war — the deaths, the injuries, the refugee movement and the displacement of millions. Jordan, as one of Iraq's neighbours, would like to recall the serious humanitarian and economic consequences that continue to affect it as a result of the first Gulf war.

For those reasons, the Government of Jordan calls on the Security Council and on all parties directly involved in the crisis to make use of every available solution to avoid war; to contribute to the stability and security of the Middle East; to respect the rights of the countries of the region and their peoples; to abide by the provisions of the Charter; and to act within the framework of internationai legitimacy and the Security Council.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of The Gambia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Grey-Johnson (Gambia): My delegation is speaking in its capacity as Chairman of the Group of African States.

At the outset, let me commend you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting at the request of the Non-Aligned Movement, which constitutes a sizeable chunk of the membership of the United Nations. As you are aware, the member States of the African Union together make up a significant bloc in the Non-Aligned Movement. It stands to reason that the position of the African Union on issues such as the one we are at present considering would be prominently reflected in the concerns of the Non-Aligned Movement on those issues. It is therefore our hope that those concerns will inform the decisions that the Council will, from our debate today, ultimately make on the burning question of Iraq.

The subject of today's meeting has engaged the whole world for a very long time now, and all peace-loving nations sincerely wish that it may be speedily brought to closure, peacefully and for the greater good of all. In striving towards that objective, the entire international community has a responsibility to ensure that the process is managed in such a way that does not unleash negative and destabilizing effects on our security, our economies, our societies and our political systems.

Experience has taught us in Africa that when elephants fight it is we, the grass, who suffer. We are fully aware that just as we bore the full brunt of the conflagrations of the cold war, so also do we now stand to suffer if the impending conflict is not averted through proper management and a peaceful resolution. Already, it is on our soil and among our innocent

people that terrorism has reared a good part of its ugly head. We cannot forget the terrorist attacks in Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Mombasa that caused huge loss of life and extensive destruction to property. We shall surely be even more exposed if mismanagement of the Iraq issue leads to the provocation of terrorist attacks on member States. Our nations do not have the sophisticated security, detection and early-warning capacities that aid preventive actions in developed countries. Our systems are not so highly developed as to be able to easily anticipate and ward off terrorist attacks, nor is it so easy for us to quickly recover from such attacks.

It is to be expected that recourse to war as a means of resolving the crisis will also naturally have a negative impact on the already weak economies of our countries, at a time when we can ill afford or sustain such an unwelcome outcome. The African economy is already showing signs of stress as a result of the uncertainties surrounding this looming conflict. War will certainly further frustrate the efforts being made by African Governments to tackle poverty and prevent conflict on the continent.

The sparring that has been going on between the opposing forces on the subject of our debate is leading many to believe that the prophetic clash of civilizations is already upon us. In many parts of the Muslim world ordinary people believe that a war on Iraq is a war on Islam. Erroneous as that perception may be, it does not give much comfort in many quarters. Africa has one of the largest concentrations of Muslims in the world. In the Sahel alone there are more than 100 million Muslims. For those large numbers of Muslims in our communities to be made to feel that they are being singled out for attack by the international community, of which we are all a part, is an eventuality that all African Governments earnestly wish to pre-empt.

Africa does not want war. In the declaration of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the African Union on the Iraqi crisis, which was made at Addis Ababa on 3 February 2003, African Governments stated that

> "military confrontation in Iraq would be a destabilizing factor for the whole region and would have far-reaching economic and security consequences for all the countries of the world, and particularly for those of Africa".

Further, the Central Organ declared that

> "the territorial integrity of Iraq should be respected and ... all diplomatic means should be pursued by international community to ensure that the Iraqi Government complies fully with the provisions of resolution 1441 and that, in any case, any new decision on the matter should emanate from the UN Security Council after a consideration of the final report of the inspection team".

The position taken by African Governments on the issue is clear and is fully consistent with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, Article 51 of which permits the use of force only "if an armed attack occurs", and even then, only "until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security". We are satisfied that the Council has taken those measures in authorizing, and continuing with, the inspections in Iraq.

Just a few days ago the Council received reports from Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on the work of the inspectors in Iraq. Most members of the Council agreed that the Iraqi authorities were beginning to cooperate and that progress was being made. Such a development encourages us all to expect that, through the work of the inspectors, Iraq will be made to disarm itself of all weapons of mass destruction without having to suffer the pains of war.

My delegation strongly urges the Iraqi authorities to cooperate fully and unconditionally with the Security Council and to comply with all the requirements put before it, not only in resolution 1441 (2002) but also in all the other resolutions that relate to the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. In particular, we call upon them once again to release the several hundred Kuwaiti prisoners of war they are holding and to return the Kuwaiti archives to where they rightfully belong, that is, in Kuwait.

The voices that have appealed for patience and for the inspections not to be interrupted or rushed are many. We urge the Council to listen to those voices and to pay heed to their most reasonable appeal.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): I did have a whole lot of nice things to say about you at the start of my address, Mr. President, but, following your instructions, I have

withdrawn them. That is not to say that I do not mean them.

We all know that on 8 November 2002 the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 (2002), affording Iraq a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations. That resolution came 11 years and seven months after resolution 687 (1991) demanded that Iraq give up its weapons of mass destruction. Given the amount of time that has passed, we had hoped that resolution 1441 (2002) would have been be the final step in resolving this issue. Given its unanimous adoption by the Council, we had hoped that the Government of Iraq would finally get the message. But, sadly, 11 years and 10 months after the Security Council first demanded that Iraq disarm, Saddam Hussain still has not understood the message.

Resolution 1441 (2002) set up two objective criteria of compliance: the provision by Iraq of a full and complete declaration of its programmes of weapons of mass destruction, and unconditional cooperation with weapons inspectors. More than three months later, by any objective reading of those criteria, Iraq has failed to meet its obligations.

On 7 December Iraq delivered a declaration that was patently incomplete. As the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) noted, it provided no new information and failed to answer serious outstanding questions, including questions about the production of anthrax, VX and mustard gas.

On 27 January, after some 60 days of inspections, neither UNMOVIC nor the IAEA were able to say that Iraq was actively cooperating. Serious questions about VX and about thousands of litres of chemical and biological agents remained unanswered.

On 5 February Secretary of State Powell presented further evidence that Iraq was not cooperating, indeed, that it was actively trying to subvert the inspection process. Australia found the intelligence presented by Secretary Powell compelling. If some believe that that information was open to interpretation, that is of course their right. But given Saddam's record of deception, I am not sure why we should be giving him the benefit of the doubt.

And on 14 February, after almost 80 days of inspections, UNMOVIC and the IAEA again reported to the Council. What did we hear? We heard that Iraq had been working to extend the range of its missile systems beyond prescribed limits. And what did we not hear? We did not hear that Iraq had finally decided to cooperate immediately, actively and unconditionally with inspectors.

It is patently clear, by the criteria established under resolution 1441 (2002), that Iraq is in further material breach of its obligations. The question today is what the Security Council, as the primary multilateral instrument of international peace and security, is going to do about it. Last year the Council spent eight weeks putting in place a robust inspection regime. Resolution 1441 (2002) gave inspectors the tools they needed to verify Iraqi disarmament — and it is verifying Iraqi disarmament which is their job, not a game of catch as catch can.

But that was only one part of the solution to this problem. Active Iraqi cooperation remains the other, more fundamental, part. And this is still missing. In the examples I have already listed — in everything we heard from Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei — the one thing missing was immediate, active and unconditional cooperation, as demanded by resolution 1441 (2002). All of us understand the importance of this. I have heard no one here say that doubling the number of inspectors or giving them more time and more resources will work without Iraqi cooperation. This is what the Council should be focusing on today.

Yes, the Council could give Iraq more time. Yes, we could wait until March; we could wait another three months. But do we really think more time will make Iraq cooperate? Does Iraq really need three more months to make a decision that it should take in no more than three minutes?

In Australia's view, the Security Council cannot wait forever to confront this issue. Either Iraq has complied or it has not. In our view, the Council should move quickly to consider a further resolution that deals decisively with Iraq's failure to comply with resolution 1441 (2002). The Security Council has a fundamental responsibility to assert its authority. If it does not, it places in jeopardy not only the cause of Iraqi disarmament, but also the very basis of our current system of collective security.

Resolution 1441 (2002) gave Iraq a final opportunity to meet its obligations and promised serious consequences if it did not comply. Is the

Security Council now saying that Iraq should be given yet more opportunities and can forget about the serious consequences? What message does that send to other States prepared to thumb their noses at international law and international norms?

Delays and divisions in the Council will only play into Iraq's hands. We cannot allow a tyrant to evade Council decisions. The Security Council must stand united around what is fundamental, and must not be distracted. It must act decisively to ensure that, after 12 years, Iraq finally meets its obligations.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Turkey. I give him the floor.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): Ever since the question of Iraq entered its present phase, Turkey has been unequivocal in its commitment to the principles that continue to govern its 80-year-old relationship with its southern neighbour. Likewise, Turkey has actively supported the wide-ranging quest for a peaceful solution of the Iraqi crisis, and we have been at the forefront of the regional initiatives in that vein. More recently,. the Istanbul Declaration, carrying the signatures of the regional countries, called on the Iraqi leadership to move irreversibly and sincerely towards assuming its responsibilities in restoring peace and stability in the region.

At about the same time, my Government let the Iraqi authorities at all levels know directly of our dire assessment of the unfolding events. We told them that Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) can in no way be construed as other than an unambiguous signal of what it said in writing.

Our efforts were geared to strengthen not the tone, but the substance, of the message that these were indeed last warnings; that it was incumbent upon the Iraqi leadership to do everything in its power to help the United Nations inspectors to absolve them, once and for all, of the charge of continuing to produce weapons of mass destruction and of continuing to conceal whatever it had of that nature, especially those biological and chemical agents that remained unaccounted for.

Today, we continue to look for the same thing: a peaceful solution. We are looking for a solution that will not require military involvement, while reassuring the world that there are no lurking dangers whatsoever of the sort that Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) deals with. In that vein, yesterday's European Union summit declaration should be seen as the latest significant initiative aiming at similar ends.

I happen to speak on behalf of another old country — founded in 1071, precisely five years after the French, according to Mr. Straw, founded Britain in 1066. And this old country has every reason to be worried. Because, along with the people of Iraq and other neighbouring countries, it is Turkey which has been receiving the raw impact of instability to its south. We cannot observe what is taking place in this oldest part of the world with any degree of indifference.

When, in 1991, for instance, nearly 500,000 refugees entered Turkey in distress, many old countries of Europe were loath to accept more than a mere 20 to 90 refugees, men, women and children. Throughout the 1990s, Thomas Friedman and others talked and wrote about Amazon tribesmen watching satellite television and demanding New York prices for their ounces of gold. Literature, both scholarly and shoddy, about globalization, extolling the beneficial effects of that process, abounded all over the world. And, throughout that decade, my country, for the first time in 1,000 years, was not able to trade to its south, because of the sanctions imposed on Iraq. Instead, we had to fight and lose tens of thousands of our most promising generation to contain and finally eradicate terrorism of the worst sort. Time has shown the truth.

Today, the very talk of war has a debilitating effect on our already fragile economy. Whatever the promise of our riches, and of the opportunities that my country abundantly possesses and that the Turkish people offer, foreign investors and other people shy away from the manifold uncertainties that seem to haunt the region.

Clearly, the Turkish people have every reason and right to desire intensely to see an end to this crisis — and, of course, a peaceful one. But even today, in spite of all I have been recounting, there are those in some quarters who would tell us that Turkey has an agenda with regard to Iraq. I would remind them of the Turkish proverb cautioning against those anglers who prefer murky waters. I am sure other languages have their equivalent warning against those who do not want you to see what they are actually seeking to achieve.

Turkey has no agenda other than reaffirming the territorial integrity and political unity of Iraq and defending the rights of all its people — Arab, Kurdish, Turcoman, Assyrian, Chaldean and others — to live in security, at peace with the world and in peace among themselves, as citizens of a country collectively benefiting from its riches.

We continue to hope that the Council will remain the focal point. Iraq must fully comply with its disarmament obligations. The international pressure exerted to that end should be pursued forthwith. The Iraqi authorities should be keenly aware that time is of the essence. More important, we should recognize that intense diplomatic efforts backed by a credible force posture still seem to be, especially in this case, the most plausible means to achieve progress. After all, the immediate, unconditional, and complete disarmament of Iraq is still the serious concern confronting international peace and security that it has been since 1991.

In that connection, we wish to commend Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their work and to salute their efforts towards reaching the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. We have full confidence in their objectivity and professionalism. We hope that the recent steps taken by the Iraqi Government — including allowing surveillance flights, encouragement of private interviews without minders in or outside Iraq, and the provision of additional documentation on outstanding disarmament issues — will prove to constitute substantive progress, thus serving the aim of achieving the long-desired proactive cooperation on the part of Iraq.

Before I conclude, I wish to underline two considerations that are foremost in our minds.

The first of these concerns the plight of the Iraqi people. The people of Turkey have close historical and cultural ties with them, along with human bonds. We are cognizant of their difficult situation and dire humanitarian conditions under the duress of harsh economic sanctions coupled with the abuse of resources, which have both gone unabated for years now. The people of Turkey know very well that they will continue to be their neighbours, next year, the year after and forever.

Secondly, Turkey attaches utmost importance to the unity and coherence of the Security Council. As we enter the corridor leading to this Chamber, we see the replica of the Kadesh Agreement, written in cuneiform on a great stone. It is a gift of Turkey to the United Nations, in fact, a gift of the Turkish soil, which has seen the dawn and rise of many empires, from the Hittites to the Ottoman. The original of this great stone of the Kadesh Agreement is in Turkey. It was signed between the Egyptians and the Hittites in 1270 B.C., that is, some 3,300 years ago, and it attests to the first-ever written agreement between two States.

Indeed, the Security Council being the only tool humanity has been able to achieve after more than three millennia of diplomacy, it is incumbent upon the members of the Council to let collective wisdom prevail. Bridging whatever gap there may be in the Council will maintain the unity and the legitimacy of this body while proving its relevance in these critical times.

For Iraq, it is the moment of truth. Iraq should now act with conviction and in a manner convincing for others in this defining hour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Moura (Brazil): Brazil has been following with concern and apprehension the situation regarding Iraq, fully aware of the implications that developments related to it may have for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The implications of the current situation and the risk of war it entails are already being felt throughout the world, through increased uncertainty, political divisions and jittery markets. There is no doubt that an armed conflict will entail great costs in human, political and economic terms. The large anti-war manifestations we have witnessed over the weekend in many countries, including my own, clearly show that significant segments of opinion within those countries view such a course of action with uneasiness and doubt, to say the least.

We have noted the opinions already put forward by Council members. We believe that holding an open debate in the wake of the presentations made by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei on Friday, 14 February provides the wider international community with a valuable opportunity for expressing views on an issue that affects us all.

The chief inspectors' presentations provide us the most recent, informative and impartial appraisals of the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). This report on their work shows the progress achieved so far, the difficulties involved and the need for immediate, active and unconditional cooperation with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the part of the Iraqi authorities.

Brazil has consistently called for Iraq's full compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1441 (2002), so as to ensure the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and other proscribed weapons, and supports further peaceful efforts within the context of the Organization towards achieving those ends. Resolution 1441 (2002) provides a framework whose possibilities must be thoroughly explored. These clearly involve full, active and unconditional cooperation on the part of the Iraqi authorities with the inspectors, greater efficiency of the inspection regime, and the development of verification and monitoring mechanisms, such as those stipulated in resolution 1284 (1999). Suggestions have been put forward in this regard by Council members, notably France, Russia and Germany. We support the goals of these initiatives. A peaceful solution to this crisis is possible. As there is still hope for peace, we must insist on it.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Ngo Duc Thang (Viet Nam): Viet Nam has followed with deep concern the latest developments surrounding Iraq, which lead to an assumption that war is inevitable. Under these circumstances, we welcome the convening of this open meeting for all Member States to express their views on this crucial issue on the agenda of the Security Council, which would have far-reaching implications for our Organization and its ability to promote the attainment of world peace and security.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our view that all peaceful means must be exhausted to find a political solution to the Iraqi issue in conformity with the United Nations Charter and international law. Viet Nam strongly believes that war is not inevitable and that there is still a chance for a peaceful solution to the Iraq issue based on respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and on the preservation of the authority and credibility of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We advocate a peaceful solution instead of military action also because we understand the consequences of a war, especially in terms of untold human suffering and material destruction for the ordinary people of the parties concerned, as well as the multifaceted impact on the region and in the world over.

The reports provided by the heads of two United Nations inspection teams, Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, at the Security Council briefing on 14 February 2003 clarified a number of issues raised at the previous meeting on Iraq. We have also learned that the Government of Iraq has demonstrated a new willingness to cooperate with the inspectors in a number of areas, such as providing new documentation on the outstanding issues, agreeing to aerial reconnaissance over its territory and allowing Iraqi scientists to be interviewed without witnesses. Moreover, both inspectors said that they had found no evidence indicating that Iraq has and was trying to hide weapons of mass destruction or prohibited chemical weapons.

We share the views of a large number of other delegations that the inspections have made real progress and have not been completed. Therefore inspections should continue, and the inspectors should be trusted and provided with all possible assistance to carry out their work.

My delegation is particularly concerned about the dire humanitarian consequences of a possible military conflict for the civilian population of Iraq, who have already suffered tremendously from the ongoing sanctions. According to the assessment made by Mr. Kenzo Oshima, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, at his briefing on 13 February 2003, under a "medium-case scenario" of a possible war, up to 10 million people may require food assistance during and after the start of the conflict, while up to half of the Iraqi population may be without access to potable water. And there is the potential that 2 million people could become internally displaced, with 600,000 to 1.45 million refugees and asylum seekers.

Another aspect that has also been brought to our attention is the negative impact that an armed conflict could have on the very fragile situation in the Middle East. A military action would further complicate the

already difficult problems in the region. We also fear that it would affect the global economy at the time when many economies are struggling to recover from recession.

Taking into consideration all these aspects, we believe that, at present, constructive dialogue between the concerned parties and uninterrupted work on the part of the United Nations inspectors are still the most effective means of achieving a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi issue.

Let me conclude my statement by saying that we are convinced that the Security Council members will take into consideration all views expressed in this meeting, discharge their responsibilities in an objective manner, and facilitate a peaceful settlement which enjoys the full support of the vast majority of the people and countries of the world, so as to fulfil the Council's important task of maintaining international peace and security.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Peru, on whom I now call.

Mr. De Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Peru endorses the legal approach requiring the Government of Iraq fully to comply with all its obligations in the area of disarmament, including the total elimination of its weapons of mass destruction, according to the terms of resolution 1441 (2002) and the other applicable resolutions of the Security Council. International norms also impose on Iraq the obligation to cooperate with the United Nations inspectors in an immediate, active and unconditional fashion, as was stated by the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, Mr. Hans Blix, in his report on Friday 14 February.

Unfortunately, we are still seeing a manifest lack of cooperation from Iraq. The Government of Iraq must understand once and for all that the only possibility that it has of normalizing its relations with the international community is immediate disarmament and unconditional compliance with the Security Council resolutions. Only such actions could be considered by the international community as verifiable guarantees that Iraq possesses no programmes or weapons of mass destruction. Only in this way can we prevent the authority and legitimacy of the United Nations from being undermined.

The Government of Peru is convinced that conflicts and threats to international peace and security — as recently stated by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan — must be resolved pursuant to the principles and mechanisms established in the Charter of the United Nations. This means that the use of force, as the Secretary-General has also asserted, must be considered as the last available recourse, but it is also important to note here that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, it is also a legitimate recourse in order to guarantee international peace and security.

Current developments are putting to the test the United Nations security system. But those developments stem from the violation by the Government of Iraq of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations in attacking Kuwait and, more recently, from its systematic refusal to implement the measures for total disarmament of weapons of mass destruction established by the Security Council. More than a decade has elapsed, and the problem still exists, jeopardizing the efficiency of the system of collective security of this Organization.

It can be said that, as matters stand, the United Nations and the international security system are being put to the test.

Peru takes the view that the crisis must be resolved within the normative framework of the United Nations, in particular in the context of the decisions taken by the Security Council, and that, as a matter of priority, all possibilities for a peaceful solution must be exhausted. We must do this. But such a peaceful solution will also hinge on immediate, unilateral and total disarmament on the part of the Government of Iraq, according to the provisions and terms set by resolution 1441 (2002).

The Government of Peru is aware of the complex nature of the inspectors' verification task and of the difficulty involved in arriving at unequivocal results in their activities. However, at the same time it can be inferred from their reports that the mandate of complete and total disarmament of weapons of mass destruction established by the Council has not been complied with in full.

In this regard, my Government endorses the demand for the full implementation of resolution 1441 (2002) within a set time frame. Time should not and

cannot be used to strip the resolutions of the Security Council of all substance or useful effect.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): I wish to thank you very much, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Hans Blix and to Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei for their reports to the Council this past Friday.

The issue of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction represents a threat to international peace and security. It is a matter of serious concern not only for certain specific countries but also for the entire international community. Underlying our concerns is the fact that in the past, Iraq has actually used chemical weapons and that, over the course of the past 12 years, it has challenged the authority and credibility of the United Nations by continuing to disregard its obligations under numerous resolutions of the Security Council.

In order to resolve this issue peacefully, Japan has been making its own diplomatic efforts, including by urging Iraq proactively to dispel every suspicion, to abide by all relevant Security Council resolutions and to abandon its weapons of mass destruction.

While resolution 1441 (2002), which was adopted unanimously by the Security Council, affirmed that Iraq was in material breach of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 687 (1991), through which Iraq committed to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction, it also provided Iraq with a final opportunity to comply with its obligations.

Japan hopes — as do all countries — that this issue will be resolved peacefully, but it is important to stress that that depends upon Iraq's attitude. Based on the deliberations of the Security Council to date, as well as on the intelligence briefing by United States Secretary of State Powell, on 5 February and on the reports by the weapons inspectors on 14 February, we cannot help but conclude that the declaration submitted by Iraq in response to resolution 1441 (2002) was neither complete nor accurate and that Iraq is not fully and proactively cooperating with the resumed inspections. To the best of our knowledge, only Iraq — no other Member State — has expressed the view in the Council that it has been cooperating fully and proactively.

We are aware that, in countries around the world, there is strong opposition to war. We share the desire to resolve this issue peacefully. It should be stressed, however, that the root of the problem is whether Iraq will radically change its attitude, cooperate immediately, proactively and without conditions and eliminate its weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. In his report to the Council on 14 February, Mr. Blix reaffirmed that Iraq's response thus far has been inadequate. Therefore, even if the inspections are continued and strengthened, they will hardly lead to the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction unless Iraq fundamentally changes its attitude of cooperating only passively. There is serious doubt as to the effectiveness of continued inspections.

In our view, it is crucial now that the international community remain united and that it continue to put strong pressure on Iraq. If the Security Council fails to act in unity, it will not only damage the credibility of the United Nations but also send the wrong message to Iraq. It would also lead to an ongoing threat, throughout the world, of terror by weapons of mass destruction.

The Government of Japan attaches great importance to international cooperation. Based on the fact that Iraq is not fully cooperating or fully discharging its obligations, we consider it desirable that the Security Council adopt a new resolution that clearly demonstrates the determined attitude of the international community. The Council should strive to adopt such a resolution. Diplomatic efforts have been made for 12 long years; Iraq now has very limited time. Japan sincerely hopes that the Council will be united and that it will take effective action to fulfil its responsibilities for international peace and security.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of New Zealand, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes this open debate. The Council is dealing with issues that are of vital importance to us all.

Countries that are not members of the Security Council last had the opportunity to address these issues in the debate four months ago, on 16 October. Since then, pursuant to resolution 1441 (2002), inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have returned to Iraq. The Council heard their reports on 27 January and again on 14 February.

The first report suggested that, while Iraq was cooperating on process, it had not cooperated sufficiently on substance. The heads of UNMOVIC and IAEA returned to Baghdad to impress on it that only full compliance with the requirements of the United Nations that it disarm and be seen to disarm would prevent the serious consequences warned of in resolution 1441 (2002). Last Friday's report suggests that Iraq has moved, at least in part, to accommodate some of the inspectors' requests. But it still must answer serious questions about material related to weapons of mass destruction that remained unanswered in 1998 when United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspectors left.

The New Zealand Government calls on Iraq to move rapidly to provide the information and cooperation requested of it to avert the catastrophe that war would bring to its people. The New Zealand Government recognizes that the Security Council must be able to authorize force as a last resort to uphold its resolution. It does not, however, believe that such a decision would be justified at this time. The inspectors' reports strongly imply that their work is useful in pursuing the objectives of the United Nations as laid out in a series of resolutions, and, as long as that is so, it should continue.

The New Zealand Government has a very strong preference for a diplomatic solution to this crisis. We place considerable weight on the inspection and disarmament process. We believe that it should run its course. We do not support military action against Iraq without a mandate from the Security Council, and we do not believe that the Council would be justified in giving that mandate at this time. Our position is based on our strong support for multilateralism, the international rule of law and our respect for the authority of the Security Council. We will uphold the Council's decisions, but we urge it at this time to ensure that all available diplomatic means are used to pursue the disarmament of Iraq as set out in the Council's resolutions.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Mahmasani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to join preceding speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, and in thanking your predecessor, the Ambassador of France, and also Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei.

The Arab Summit convened in Beirut last March adopted a resolution in which it categorically rejected any attack against Iraq or any threat against the peace and security of any Arab State. Such an attack was considered a threat to collective Arab national security. The resolution also welcomed Iraq's commitment to respecting the independence, sovereignty and security of the State of Kuwait, and it called upon Iraq to cooperate in order to find a rapid solution to the issue of prisoners of war and detainees, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The reports of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) presented by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on 14 February confirmed some progress in the inspections process. They also confirmed Iraq's cooperation, which leads us to stress the need for those operations to continue until such time as the Iraqi file can be closed and the sanctions can be lifted, in accordance with paragraph 22 of resolution 687 (1991).

Mr. Blix reported that:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The situation has improved. ...(*S/PV.4707, p. 2*)
>
> "All inspections were performed without notice and access was almost always provided promptly. (*ibid.*)
>
> "...
>
> "So far, UNMOVIC has found no such weapons [of mass destruction]". (*ibid., p. 3*)

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The conclusions reached by Mr. ElBaradei in his report include the following:

(*spoke in English*)

> "We have to date found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in Iraq." (*S/PV.4707, p. 9*)

(*spoke in Arabic*)

In the light of the conclusions reached by the inspectors, who are the only legitimate authority entrusted with the verification and submission of evidence to the Security Council, there is no justification for waging war against Iraq. Therefore we ask: why a war? What are the imminent danger and sudden threats that would justify it?

The inspectors are pursuing their inspections throughout Iraq. The eyes of the Security Council are on Iraq. Satellites and reconnaissance aircraft fly through the skies of Iraq. Where, therefore, is the danger posed so starkly by Iraq as to warrant a war within weeks? The insistence on waging war against Iraq at a time when the inspectors are striving to verify that country's disarmament of its weapons of mass destruction raises the question as to whether the war is actually intended to disarm Iraq of such weapons or to achieve other objectives.

The countries of the Middle East — with the exception of Israel of course — call for a halt in the preparations for war against Iraq. International polls indicate a worldwide rejection of war. Seventy-seven per cent of the British reject war and 59 per cent of Americans call for the inspectors to be given more time. From Sydney to New York, millions have demonstrated against the impending war in Iraq.

The imminent threat to the peace and stability of the Arab nation is Israel's arsenal of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their delivery systems. Israel continues to occupy Arab territories and pursues a policy of destruction of the Palestinian people. For the past 22 years, it has rejected the implementation of Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which calls on Israel to submit its nuclear programmes and facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime. For the past 12 years, it has rejected the implementation of paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), which calls for the creation of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Why do we condone Israel's behaviour and why do the inspection teams not head there to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction? Why, I ask, are there such double standards?

Amidst the cloud of war hanging over the region, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the League of Arab States met in Cairo on 16 February and confirmed the Arab countries' rejection of any act of aggression against or threat to the peace and security of any Arab State. They considered any such threat to be a threat to collective Arab security. The Council of Foreign Ministers also rejected any political plan or policy to impose changes on the region, to interfere in its internal affairs or to ignore the legitimate interests of the peoples of the region.

We hope that the end of the cold war late in the last century will not signal a prelude to the onset of hot wars in the new century, beginning with a war on Iraq. The option of war represents a failure of the Security Council and a collapse of the present international system, as well as a challenge to the United Nations Charter, which is the sole safety valve for protecting countries, particularly the weaker ones, and for preserving international peace and security.

To preserve the peace in the Arab region and throughout the world, we call on everyone to reject the option of war and to give the inspectors sufficient time to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi question. The statement adopted by the European Union summit in Brussels said, in part:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The Union's objective for Iraq remains full and effective disarmament ... We want to achieve this peacefully. It is clear that this is what the people of Europe want."

It is clear by now that this is what the peoples of the world want. Let us not fail them.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ukraine, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): We are pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council. Today's meeting provides a unique opportunity to hear the views of numerous delegations on the most burning issue of the day.

More than half a century ago, speaking about the efforts to achieve peace, Sir Winston Churchill said:

> "Vast and fearsome as the human scene has become, personal contact of the right people, in the right places, at the right time, may yet have a potent and valuable part to play in the cause of peace which is in our hearts".

A few days ago, thousands of people gathered here as a vast and fearsome ocean at the United Nations, calling

it the right place for the right and adequate decision to be taken in order to preserve the peace.

On behalf of the Ukrainian delegation, I wish to join those who believe that the right people, gathered today in the Security Council, will find the right solution to the critical issue on our agenda, and I express, Mr. President, our full support for your strenuous efforts to lead the Council towards that goal.

Ukraine is extremely concerned about the situation around Iraq. We understand that there may exist serious grounds for suspecting Iraq of concealing its weapons of mass destruction. The position of Ukraine is well known and clear: Iraq must fulfil all its obligations under respective Security Council resolutions, resolution 1441 (2002) included.

Ukraine welcomes the outcome of the inspections and the report presented to the Council on 14 February by the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as the move by the United States to provide the United Nations with additional information.

It is imperative that the United Nations inspectors continue their work so as to be able to clarify the unresolved questions of the disarmament of Iraq. The questions still remain.

I would like to express to Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei Ukraine's confidence in their mission and our full support. We have already demonstrated it through the work of the Ukrainian experts in UNMOVIC. We consider the inspection and monitoring mechanisms to be the best way to detect, destroy and verify the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

It is perfectly clear that the work of UNMOVIC and the IAEA can be effective only with full cooperation in good faith on the part of Iraq. We call upon the Iraqi authorities to translate concretely and urgently their declared commitments into active cooperation and collaboration with the inspection process, as provided for in resolution 1441 (2002). We urge Iraq to adopt a more proactive approach, to make further explanations and clarifications on the issues raised by the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, the Director General of IAEA and the United States Secretary of State and, ultimately, to disarm in compliance with the Security Council's resolutions.

The Security Council has a common stand on the issue of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Ukraine's position has been unequivocally aimed at achieving the disarmament of Iraq in the most effective way possible, while ensuring at all times that this goal is achieved at the lowest cost in terms of human suffering. Under the present circumstances, it is critical to make further steps towards achieving the unity of the Security Council on this issue without undermining the ongoing battle against international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We are entering a crucial stage in the consideration of the Iraqi issue. The Ukrainian delegation believes that the option of a political and diplomatic solution has not been fully exhausted and that it can still provide effective results. As long as there is the slightest hope for a peaceful settlement, we should exert our utmost efforts to achieve it. Ukraine, on its part, is ready to make a further practical contribution to the international efforts aimed at achieving a successful settlement of the Iraqi crisis and at ensuring international security.

As the world is pinning its hopes on the United Nations and the Security Council in making the decision, we have to weigh all the pros and cons and consider what lies ahead not only in the forthcoming weeks and months, but years. We must make sure that our decision is guided by wisdom and responsibility.

War is the last and worst resort, and I cannot but agree with one of the speakers who said here earlier that war is always the sanction of failure.

What the world needs most today is peace. Let us stay united and work tirelessly for it. Let us give peace yet another chance.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Oman.

Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first of all to thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Security Council for quickly agreeing to the request of the Group of Non-Aligned States to hold this open meeting to study the report presented by the heads of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the destruction of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The Security Council is meeting today to study and important question, namely the assessment of the conclusions of the teams of inspectors entrusted with the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the monitoring and verifying of the presence of any such weapons. We have studies with interest the two reports submitted by the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC and Director General of IAEA, Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, respectively.

We are convinced that significant results in fact have truly been achieved. These achievements are consonant with Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) on the one hand, and are also in accordance to a great extent with the demands of the chief inspector. During the meetings of the inspectors in Baghdad he asked the Iraqi Government to adopt three measures. The first was to allow for free and unconditional aerial surveillance through surveillance reconnaissance aircraft. The second was for private interviews with Iraqi scientists without third parties present. The third was that Iraq adopt and enact legislation prohibiting the possession or local manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq has recently done so. It has been involved in dispelling concerns regarding substantive issues. We have seen this in the statements of international inspectors and through Iraqi acceptance of overflights of American U-2 planes of its airspace.

We welcome the positive steps undertaken by Iraq to cooperate with UNMOVIC and the IAEA and believe that such positive cooperation, which is continuing between Iraq and UNMOVIC, will lead to a settlement of remaining unresolved issues.

We understand the profound and real concerns of the United States and United Kingdom regarding the dangers of the use of weapons of mass destruction for the security and stability of the world. We welcome the positions of member States of the Security Council. In particular the positions of the permanent members, for they have demonstrated a great sense of responsibility during study of the issue. We understand all of that.

However, it also behooves the international community to maintain international peace and stability. Therefore, the United States and the United Kingdom are crucial partners for the Middle East. They must work to avoid war in this region. The consequences would be tragic not only for Iraq but also for the region and the entire world.

Thus, we hope that all the members of the Council will be able to take position designed to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and other States of the region by peaceful means and through the United Nations. In light of this, and aware of the legal, political and moral responsibility that devolves on Council members to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles of the Charter, we hope that the Council will discharge its responsibilities and make it possible for UNMOVIC and the IAEA in accordance with the demands of their mandate. We hope that the Council will make it possible for both bodies to continue their work, discharge their responsibilities under their mandates.

Thus, efforts would be pooled to facilitate inspections, which have proved to be effective. That would enable the peaceful implementation of the Council's resolutions. Another report would then be presented to the Council on Iraqi cooperation with the international inspectors in the area of the destruction of weapons of mass destruction, if they existed.

In that context, and in light of regional and international events and of the repeated statements we have heard opposing military action against Iraq, my delegation reiterates the hope that it will be possible to avoid any military action of any kind. For that would threaten the security and stability of the Gulf region in particular and the Middle East as a whole. Therefore this prompts us to support the initiatives for peace to deal with this issue.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm the need for Iraq to quickly and unconditionally fulfil its remaining obligations to facilitate matters for UNMOVIC and the IAEA. We also urge the Council to exhaust all peaceful means and diplomatic efforts to implement the relevant resolutions for international peace and security, to put an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people and to ensure respect for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Iraq.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council at

this very sensitive time. I should also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the special relationship between our two friendly countries, which is daily growing stronger. At the same time, I would like to express our appreciation and admiration for the principled and wise leadership provided by France during its presidency of the Council last month.

Your prompt response, Sir, to the request made by the representative of South Africa, on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, for the convening of an open meeting of the Council allowing all States Members of the Organization to participate, rather than restricting participation to Council members only, was an eloquent expression of your recognition of the fact that questions pertaining to global peace and security are not the preserve of certain States alone. Nor do such issues affect the interests of some and not of others. The situation in Iraq is thus of concern to all, making an international consensus indispensable.

I am not the first to say that the eyes of the whole world are on the Council to see how it will deal with the situation in Iraq. Analysts and observers agree that the international system is at a crossroads. The Council's decision on this question will have enormous repercussions for international relations in general and for the future of the United Nations in particular.

Like all the other States of the region, the Republic of Yemen would like to express profound concern about the tense situation prevailing in the region – the massing of troops, the media war and the constant threat of the use of force against Iraq. In this regard, we would like to make a number of points.

First, we greatly appreciate the efforts of the Security Council and the interest shown by the majority of its members in exhausting all peaceful means to ensure the implementation of its resolutions on the disarmament of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, in particular through the recent resolution 1441 (2002). The implementation of the provisions of that resolution would be a step towards dealing with the consequences of the 1991 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In this context, the Government of the Republic of Yemen welcomes the cooperation extended by the Iraqi Government to the international inspection teams in implementation of the resolution to which I referred.

We reaffirm once again the importance of the Iraqi Government's honouring its commitments regarding the remaining issues raised by the inspectors, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legality. At the same time, we believe that Iraq must honour its commitments with regard to resolving the issue of Kuwaiti missing persons in accordance with Security Council resolutions and with the decisions taken at the Beirut Arab Summit. This is a humanitarian question that continues to act as a stumbling block on the road to a rapprochement between the two countries. It should be resolved in such a way as to end the estrangement between those two brotherly peoples and ensure Arab solidarity.

Secondly, we reaffirm the importance of implementing the remaining relevant Security Council resolutions setting out the Council's objectives. In this regard, we stress that the Security Council is entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security on behalf of the international community. We would also like to reaffirm the validity of the provisions of the United Nations Charter, which make it clear that nothing can justify interference in the internal affairs of a State. There is no doubt that interfering in the internal affairs of a given country in order to bring about change there would constitute a very serious precedent and would cause confusion and chaos in international relations. It would take us back to the era of the League of Nations, which was followed by a world war, something that would be unacceptable for human beings in the twenty-first century.

Thirdly, the Republic of Yemen reaffirms its support for Security Council resolutions in general and in particular for those pertaining to the question of Iraq in particular. However, my country has always stressed the need for all the members of the Council to act with a sense of responsibility so that the Council cannot be accused of selectivity or double standards with regard to such resolutions. Paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), concerning the elimination of weapons of mass destruction from all States of the region, including Israel, must be implemented. Legally binding international resolutions concerning the Palestinian question must be implemented with the same zeal that is shown in the implementation of the resolutions concerning Iraq.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen has noted with satisfaction the accurate and responsible views expressed by some countries, calling for Members of this Organization to look further than their noses and to go beyond narrow, immediate self-interest

so as to lead the international community towards ensuring security and stability in the Middle East in a manner that safeguards the interests of all.

Once again, I would like to reiterate my country's concern about the ongoing threat to invade the brotherly country Iraq. My country strongly opposes any military action outside the framework of international legality, whatever pretexts and justifications are put forward. The drums of war and the dust raised by the military massing obscure the truth. It would be both wise and necessary for the Security Council to give peaceful means a chance, as they have not yet been exhausted. In this respect, we support the opinion of the majority of States, which have called for giving the inspection teams the necessary time to finish their task without time pressure or other influence.

Let us not forget that at an earlier stage the inspection teams destroyed a great deal more than was destroyed by war in 1991 or by successive aerial bombardments of Iraq. Continuing the inspection and monitoring regime is the only way to close this ominous file. The only cost of peaceful action is patience and perseverance. Military invasion, however, would lead to the further destruction of Iraq and the further destabilization of the region. That would constitute a threat to peace and security throughout the world. It would also take international relations back to the policy of force and the logic of military blocs and military solutions. That would be inconsistent with the spirit and the letter of the United Nations Charter.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Greece, on whom I now call.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, as well as the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, declare that they align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the situation in Iraq, as evidenced by the extraordinary meeting of the European Council held yesterday to discuss the ongoing crisis over that country. On that occasion the members of the European Council also met with Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Pat Cox.

The European Union reaffirms the 27 January conclusions of its General Affairs and External Relations Council, as well as the terms of the public démarche of 4 February 2003 to Iraq, which remain valid.

The European Union believes that the way the unfolding of the situation in Iraq is handled will have an important impact on the world in the coming decades. We are determined to deal effectively with the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We are committed to the United Nations remaining at the centre of the international order. We recognize that the primary responsibility for dealing with Iraqi disarmament lies with the Security Council. We pledge our full support to the Council in discharging its responsibilities.

The European Union's objective for Iraq remains full and effective disarmament from weapons of mass destruction in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, in particular resolution 1441 (2002). We want to achieve this peacefully. It is clear that this is what the people of Europe want. War is not inevitable. Force should be used only as a last resort. It is for the Iraqi regime to end this crisis by complying with the demands of the Security Council.

The European Union reiterates its full support for the ongoing work of the United Nations inspectors. They must be given the time and resources that the Security Council believes they need. However, inspections cannot continue indefinitely in the absence of full Iraqi cooperation. This must include the provision of all additional and specific information on the issues that have been raised in the inspectors' reports.

Baghdad should have no illusions. It must disarm and cooperate immediately and fully. Iraq has a final opportunity to resolve the crisis peacefully. The Iraqi regime alone will be responsible for the consequences if it continues to flout the will of the international community and does not take this last chance.

The European Union recognizes that the unity and firmness of the international community, as expressed in the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), and the military build-up have been essential in obtaining the return of the inspectors.

These factors will remain essential if we are to achieve the full cooperation we seek.

The European Union will work with Arab countries and the League of Arab States. We will encourage them, separately and jointly, to bring home to Saddam Hussain the extreme danger of miscalculation of the situation and the need for full compliance with resolution 1441 (2002). We support Turkey's regional initiatives with the neighbours of Iraq and Egypt.

In this regional context, the European Union reiterates its firm belief in the need to reinvigorate the peace process in the Middle East and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We continue to support early implementation of the roadmap endorsed by the Quartet. Terror and violence must end; so must settlement activity. Palestinian reforms must be sped up. In that respect, President Arafat's statement that he will appoint a prime minister is a welcome step in the right direction.

The unity of the international community is vital in dealing with these problems. The European Union is committed to working with all our partners, especially the United States, for the disarmament of Iraq, for peace and stability in the region and for a decent future for all its people.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate. I also wish to thank the delegation of South Africa for having requested this meeting.

I believe we should ask ourselves why we are gathered here once again today to deal with the question of Iraq. The answer is simple: on 2 August 1990 Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait. Once all peaceful means to resolve the situation had been exhausted, the Security Council authorized the use of force to restore the independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait. In addition, by resolution 687 (1991), which established the terms of the ceasefire, the Council decided that Iraq had to agree unconditionally to the elimination of all its weapons of mass destruction under international supervision. That is a central aspect of the resolution.

More than 12 years later, Iraq has not complied with its obligations and continues to defy the will of the international community and the authority of the Security Council. That is why we are here today to deal with this issue. As Argentina's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Carlos Ruckauf, stated in the General Assembly last September,

> "It is not a good thing when some Member States do not abide by United Nations resolutions. It is intolerable that these resolutions remain unimplemented when issues related to the very existence of mankind on the planet are involved." (*A/57/PV.12, p. 26*)

He went on to say that

> "The existence of arsenals with bacteriological, chemical and other similar weapons that can be used in a traditional or terrorist war is a matter that affects all men, women and children of the world." (*ibid.*)

I think it is appropriate to recall those words, which, despite being obvious, seem to be absent from the debate on this matter and from the coverage of this issue in the international press. No one in the Council has stated that Iraq has complied with its obligations or that we are dealing with an abusive demand being made by a State or group of States of a weaker country. Argentina shares the view that Iraq must be obliged to fully meet its disarmament obligations. The Iraqi regime must understand once and for all that the international community will not accept any other alternative and that the Security Council is united in that objective, even though there may be difference of opinion as regards methods and, in particular, as to the time frame for achieving the goal.

The Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, has recognized that the behaviour of the Iraqi regime constitutes a threat to international peace and security. That is why, on 8 November 2002, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 (2002), which gave Iraq one last opportunity.

In our opinion, the Council must exert constant pressure on this stubborn Government to comply with what the international community has been demanding for the last 12 years. The international community has been very patient. It cannot accept a repetition of the history of concealment and deceit that took place between 1991 and 1998. Doing so would not only

affect the credibility of the Security Council; it would also represent a grave failure to those of us who are taking part in the struggle against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The question is how to achieve that objective. In our opinion, the inspections that resumed last November have yielded results, and they must continue. We support Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, who have an extremely important and difficult task that they are carrying out with objectivity, professionalism and efficiency. But in order for the inspections to produce full results, the Iraqi Government must abandon its reluctant attitude and provide the active and substantive cooperation required by resolution 1441 (2002). It is also worth recalling that Iraq must comply with the other obligations set out in resolution 687 (1991), facilitating the return of Kuwaiti property and the repatriation of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals.

In the course of the discussion of this issue, there has been mention of the grave threat to international peace and security posed by possible links between a State in possession of weapons of mass destruction and terrorist organizations, and the Council was given dramatic examples of the risks of chemical and biological weapons. My Government shares this concern and expresses its determination to face the challenges that the link with terrorism may add to this issue. At the same time, my Government takes this opportunity to voice its concern about the continuation of unjust situations in international economic practice. Those situations are exploited by terrorism, which provides an evil opportunity to give voice to the desperation of vast regions of the developing world.

No sense of urgency should divert us from the objective of disarming Iraq by peaceful means. All peaceful options must be explored and exhausted. We must avoid an avoidable war, in which my country would not participate.

But once all peaceful means have been exhausted, if the Iraqi regime persists in its reluctant attitude, and if the purpose of resolution 1441 (2002), which is none other than the complete and verifiable disarm ment of Iraq, cannot be fulfilled, then the serious consequences anticipated in the resolution will take place. But those serious consequences must not include bombing defenceless towns and cities. The lives of men, women and children — who for years have been living under a genocidal dictatorship and who desire freedom and an end to death and desolation — must be preserved. It is in the highest interests of Iraq to seize this last chance.

I would not wish to conclude these remarks without expressing our sympathy and affection for the Iraqi people, which is enduring a situation of deprivation and anxiety for its security, the responsibility for which lies solely with the regime that oppresses them.

As we have stated to the Secretary-General, Argentina is ready, within the framework of the United Nations, to provide humanitarian assistance in order to help relieve the suffering of that people.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Sudan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Manis (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are also most pleased to thank the representative of France for his outstanding leadership of the Council last month.

The holding of this open meeting shows the extraordinary importance that the international community attaches to the crisis in international relations at this critical turning point. We are convinced that the enormous challenges we face require that the international community engage in dialogue and consultation in order to spare the world a war whose negative repercussions would be long-lasting and geographically widespread.

It is crucial that we be guided by the principles of the United Nations Charter, which we all consider as the ultimate guideposts for sparing the world the agony and tragedy of war. The Charter guarantees that force shall be used only as a last resort, after all other options have been exhausted. The reports delivered by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei regarding the inspections in Iraq convince us that continuing the inspections and strengthening their effectiveness can, in fact, achieve the objectives laid down in resolution 1441 (2002).

My country would like to reaffirm the conclusions of the Arab Summit held in Beirut last March, relating to the need to implement resolutions of international legality, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Iraq and Kuwait, and to settle the issue of prisoners of war and missing persons.

We are convinced that Iraq is continuing to cooperate fully with the United Nations inspectors in settling the crisis in a peaceful manner, which prepares the way for the lifting of sanctions. This has been shown by Iraq's genuine will to cooperate with the inspectors and by the strong and encouraging measures undertaken by that country.

Thus, we share the views of several delegations that options other than war must be found. We support approaches based on the peaceful settlement of disputes through the United Nations. We see no justification for the Security Council to adopt an additional resolution, and we request that the inspectors be given the time they need to complete their mission.

Our conviction is based on our unshakeable faith in shared humanitarian values. Let us reject violence and destruction and build a world in which a culture of peace will reign. Let us give peace a chance, and let us provide the children of Iraq a childhood their memories of which will not be ones of carnage and destruction, shelters and orphans.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Saint Lucia. I give him the floor.

Mr. Huntley (Saint Lucia): I have the honour to present a statement today on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), that is, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, at the end of their fourteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting, which was held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 14 and 15 February 2003, issued the following statement on the situation with regard to Iraq.

> "We, the heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, having considered the situation developing over Iraq, wish to express our profound concern at the escalation of global tensions and their grave implications for the preservation of international peace and security. We are deeply troubled over the humanitarian tragedy that an outbreak of war will bring about and the disastrous effects which it will have on global economic stability.
>
> "We emphasize that no State should have the right to foster the development of weapons of mass destruction in any form, including chemical and biological agents. We recall that the Security Council had compelled Iraq to cease the development and production of weapons of mass destruction and has obligated it to give total access to the United Nations weapons inspectors to verify its compliance with Security Council resolutions.
>
> "We appeal to Iraq to cooperate fully with all the requirements of UNMOVIC and the IAEA inspectors, and to fulfil its commitments to the United Nations and the international community in this regard. We are convinced that Iraq's full and transparent implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) will contribute to the easing of tensions and will strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to bring about a peaceful resolution of the situation.
>
> "We reiterate that the United Nations, through its Security Council, has been charged with the responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. We are, therefore, deeply disturbed at the prospect of the use of military force in Iraq without the endorsement of the United Nations Security Council and in the absence of a final conclusion by the United Nations weapons inspectors that Iraq is in material breach of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).
>
> "We are in total support of the position taken by the United Nations Secretary-General that 'this is an issue not for any one State alone, but for the international community as a whole'. In this connection, we stress that any unilateral action taken outside a United Nations Security Council mandate will undermine the integrity of the United Nations and considerably weaken the multilateral system and its machinery for preserving peace and security.
>
> "We are firmly opposed to the use of armed force at a time when it is clear that diplomatic efforts have not yet been exhausted and when the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors are reporting some progress and requesting more time to complete their work. We believe that it is essential for all States to support the work of the

inspectors and to create the conditions to allow them to fulfil their mandate.

"We urge the Government of the United States and its military allies on this issue to exercise restraint in their approach to this complex international crisis. We wish to express our particular anxiety at the consequences a war will have not only for the region of the Middle East but for the entire world, and at the disproportionate burden that would be borne by small developing States, including those in the Caribbean, which are ill-prepared to cope with the impact of a global recession provoked by volatile oil prices, severe dislocation to their vital tourism and financial services sectors and falling levels of investment.

"We the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community reaffirm the commitment of the Caribbean Community to a just world order based on respect for the rule of law and social justice, and guaranteeing peace, security and sustainable development for all. We remain committed to international efforts to combat terrorism. We also remain convinced that diplomacy and dialogue present the most enlightened approach to building understanding and to resolving conflicts in a modern and interdependent world."

We thank the Council for the opportunity to present this statement.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Ivanov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): First, allow me to associate myself with the gratitude expressed by previous speakers for the opportunity offered by this meeting of the Security Council in the present format.

The dynamic of the development of events concerning Iraq and the consideration of this question within the Security Council are the focus of the close attention of the President and the Government of the Republic of Belarus. Belarus is convinced that the international community has available to it specific and practical possibilities for maintaining the process of Iraq's disarmament on a political and diplomatic plane. Shifting the problem of Iraq to a military plane without making use of those possibilities would run counter to the interests of international peace and security and the imperatives of international law.

The Republic of Belarus favours the continuation and stepping up of the activities of inspectors in Iraq and calls on the Government of Iraq to follow unswervingly the policy of constructive cooperation with the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We find counterproductive any kind of ultimatum limiting the time frame for the activities of the inspectors or for the process of Iraq's implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Belarus is deeply concerned by the rhetoric in favour of the use of force as a means of resolving the problem and by the continuing escalation of tension around Iraq. We firmly oppose the unilateral use of force against Iraq in violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity and the bypassing of the Security Council.

A solution acceptable to the international community on the question of Iraq can be found only within the framework of the competence of the Security Council and must be strictly complied with by all members of the international community.

The President and the Government of the Republic of Belarus are convinced that comprehensive Iraqi cooperation with the United Nations and the continuing normalization of relations between Iraq and Kuwait will guarantee a definitive solution to the problem of Iraq. We also believe that an integral element of this process is the gradual lifting of the sanctions on Iraq.

The Republic of Belarus calls upon the Security Council to be guided by the need to maintain peace in the Middle East and to prevent the unleashing of a major international conflict with unforeseeable consequences.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Nambiar (India): Since this is the first time we are making a statement in the Security Council in the month of February, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. I would also like to thank you for providing the general membership an opportunity to express itself on this important issue. Your stewardship of the Security Council comes at a time when the Council is required

to consider some of the most critical and complex issues to arise before it in recent years. We wish you the very best in coping with the challenging tasks that lie ahead of you.

India participated in the last open debate of the Security Council on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, held on 16 and 17 October 2002. Matters have evolved considerably since that time. The landmark resolution 1441 (2002) was adopted unanimously by the Council on 8 November 2002. The resolution facilitated the resumption of United Nations inspections in Iraq after a gap of four years. It has now been almost three months since the recommencement of inspections.

The heads of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have briefed the Council with regular periodicity on the progress of inspections since their recommencement. We have all had the benefit of listening to the carefully worded, concise and thorough briefings by them on 27 January and 14 February. Their reports constitute the essential basis on which the Council would be required to take decisions on a matter of international peace and security. We wish to convey our appreciation for the work of those two bodies and their heads.

Resolution 1441 (2002) is the latest in a series of Security Council resolutions on the disarmament of Iraq and related subjects. Resolution 1441 (2002) provides a stringent regime of inspections designed to accomplish that very task. We call upon Iraq to cooperate actively with the inspections process and to comply fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

As many of us understood it, the gist of UNMOVIC Executive Chairman Mr. Hans Blix's message at the briefing of 14 February was that Iraq had been cooperating on process but had not done as much on substance as it was required to do under resolution 1441 (2002). While there is a widespread feeling that inspections have to be given a chance, there is also a feeling that the Council cannot be expected to wait indefinitely to secure immediate, active and unconditional cooperation. The recent deliberations in the Security Council over how to deal with the Iraq issue reflect serious differences in approach on the subject within the Council itself. The Council now needs to move forward with unity of purpose.

India has consistently stood in favour of a peaceful resolution of the Iraq issue. We believe that the objective of the international community is to facilitate the disarmament of Iraq, and that it is necessary to pursue all available options provided for under resolution 1441 (2002). Force should be resorted to only as a last, unavoidable option.

India has also maintained the primacy of the multilateral route in addressing the issue of Iraq. The Prime Minister of India, in his address to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly last year, stated the following:

> "A common destiny is at stake. The world needs collective multilateralism. It needs the United Nations, the coming together and working together of all its nations in the development of a common and collective perspective." (*A/57/PV.4, p. 16*)

That is why we applauded the announcement by President Bush in that very forum to "work with the Security Council to meet our common challenge" (*A/57/PV.2, p. 9*). We continue to believe that the resolution of this issue is best achieved through the collective forum of States, represented by the United Nations.

India is concerned about the difficult humanitarian situation in Iraq. The Iraqi people have suffered severe shortages and privations for more than a decade. Sixty per cent of the Iraqi population currently relies on the United Nations oil for food programme. The programme, which has been run in an exemplary manner by the United Nations, could be jeopardized by military action in Iraq, leading to a humanitarian situation that could leave, by some accounts, as many as 10 million people dependent on the outside world for food assistance. It is important that the Council consider the alleviation of the situation that the Iraqi people find themselves in while considering the larger picture.

India is vitally interested in the peace and security of the Gulf region, with which we have had profound political, cultural, economic and religious ties spread over centuries. Our special concerns with the current crisis arise from the presence of millions of our expatriates who live and work in the Gulf region, from

threats to the security of oil supplies and the volatility of oil prices that could follow military action, and from the build-up of public sentiments in the region.

In a related context, we note that, at the end of last year, Iraq returned the first batch of documents belonging to the Kuwaiti archives, and that, at the beginning of this year, Iraq also handed over some separate items of Kuwaiti properties. Most important is the humanitarian issue involving the search for missing Kuwaitis and other, third- country, nationals. We are happy to note that it has been agreed to start discussions on this issue under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and within the context of the Tripartite Commission. We understand that the second meeting of the newly established Technical Subcommittee has just taken place in Amman. We congratulate Ambassador Vorontsov for his efforts in this direction and would like to see him continue his good work.

At the same time, we would also like to see implementation of provisions relating to the repatriation of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and the return of all Kuwaiti property, as stipulated under resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and section B of resolution 1284 (1999). We hope that Iraq will act in good faith.

We sense, and the world senses, that the Security Council is coming close to making a decision between war and peace. However, we would urge the Council, before it makes a final determination on the question, to seriously consider the numerous complex ramifications that surround any step taken by it. These include issues such as the dangers posed by the development of weapons of mass destruction and risks of their diversion to non-State actors; the credibility of enforcement action under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and the question of compliance; the rationale and effectiveness of weapons inspections; and the continuing pressure of sanctions.

Apart from the immediate consequences of military action in a region that is already volatile, the Council will need to take into account the impact of the possible breakup of the concerned State on neighbouring States, and its larger implications for peace, stability and security in the region, as well as the dangers of radicalization of public opinion around the world. Yet another set of issues of a different order of magnitude concern the potential massive internal displacement of people and possible refugee flows, the disruption of oil supplies and other such immediate economic and social repercussions of a possible outbreak of conflict.

We do not, as yet, have clear answers to these questions. These are questions that do not have simple answers, but they are questions that cannot be evaded. As the multilateral organ of the United Nations charged with safeguarding international peace and security, the Security Council must give careful thought to these questions and issues before it makes an irrevocable move.

The President: In view of the lateness of the hour, and with the concurrence of the member of the Council, I would like to suspend the meeting until tomorrow at 10 a.m. sharp. I would like to make an appeal to the members to start at 10 sharp, because we heard 27 speakers this afternoon and another 29 remain on the list.

The meeting was suspended at 6.40 p.m.